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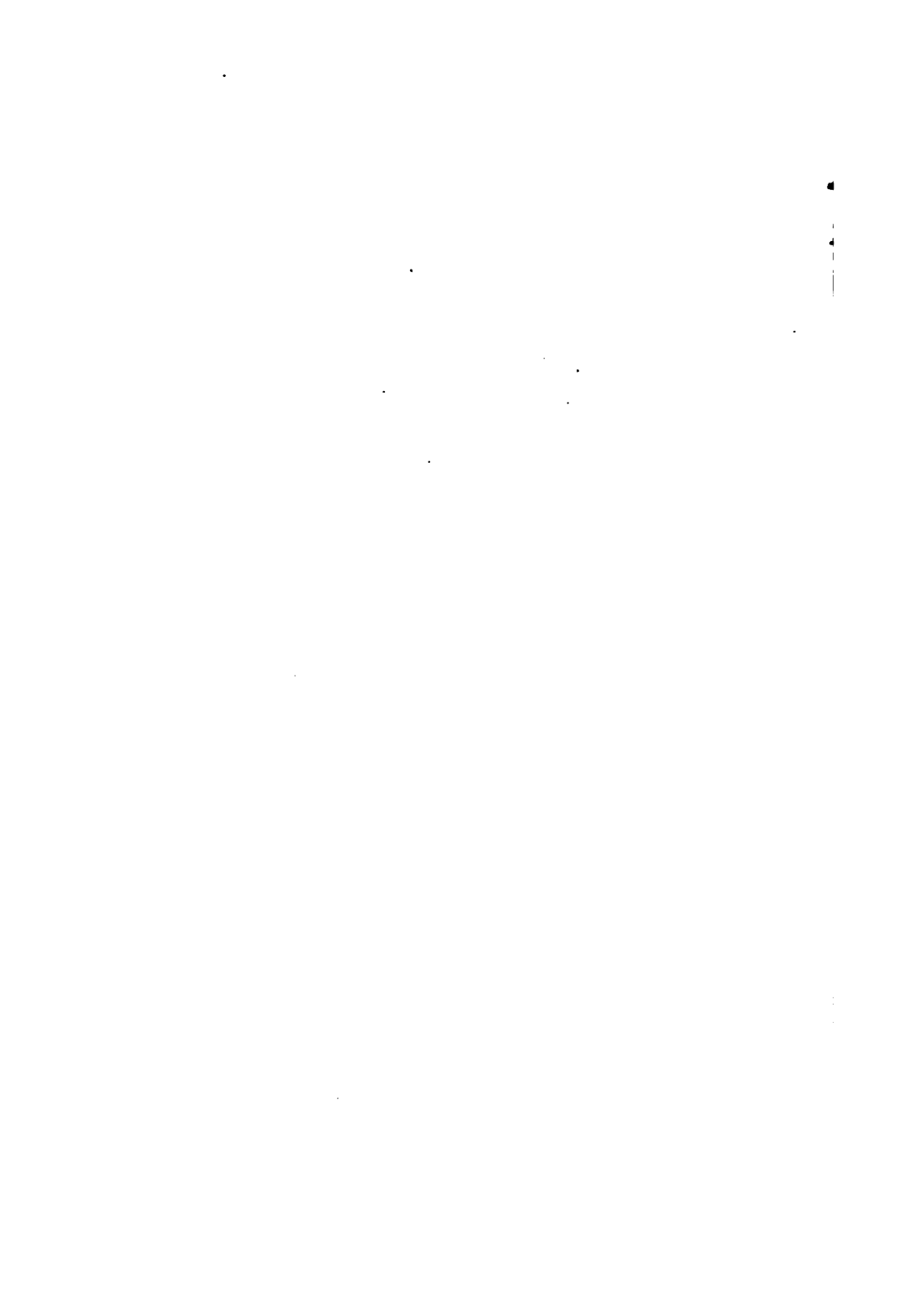
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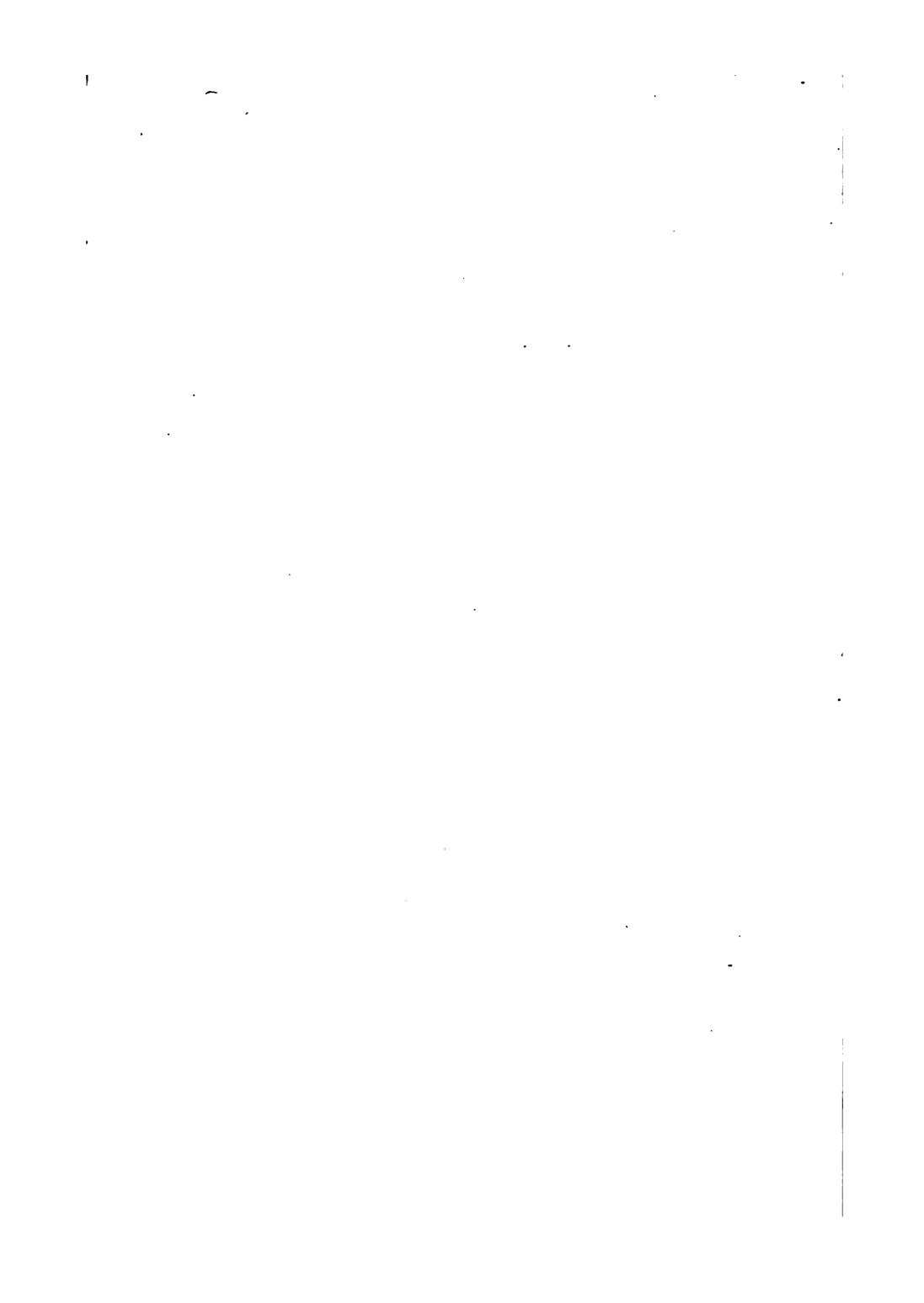


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FARNBOROUGH HALL.



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OR,

NEW LIFE ON THE OLD FARM.

BY

HUBERT SIMMONS,

AUTHOR OF "STUBBLE FARM," "ERNEST STRUGGLES," ETC.

In Three Volumes.

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FARNBOROUGH HALL.

CHAPTER I.

IN company with my sister, known previously to my readers as "Aunt Mary Ann," I had been talking over various matters, of family interest only, on the day when we were to have our farmers' garden-party, and as we emerged from the avenue of clustering hops which augur well for a splendid crop and sufficient to make our own beer, we came upon the new rick-cloth, which made a capital tent for the tea on the grass-plot, securing us in the event of a storm, and there everything

was in readiness but the tea and coffee. Master Cock Robin had taken possession of the table, and was helping himself to the tipsy cake. In the country it is a saying that robins and wrens are God Almighty's friends, and as such they are treated. In spite of this they do not increase in number, and so sure as September sets in the young robins commence to twitter an insulting challenge to their parents, and end by fighting and pecking the old birds to death. This, together with casualties, may account for the non-increase of robin population, but I cannot say why wrens do not increase. They live entirely on insects, and do no mischief in a garden.

The privet hedge formed two sides of the tent, and the gardener having disguised the poles and ropes with ivy and ever-

greens, and decorated the table with ferns and flowers of his best, in the arrangement of which my daughters directed him, the tent was complete and the simple feast in readiness. The arbour, too, had been taken in hand by George, who was responsible for a display of long pipes, tobacco, and whiskey, and who had decorated the arbour with miniature sheaves of all our crops of corn, each one bearing a ticket of the field it was growing in, the name of the corn, and the probable yield. The samples were so tastefully arranged that they did credit to my son, and, I may say, to my farm.

"Come," said I, "this will interest my farmer friends more than the roses, I will be bound;" for when farmers meet we do like to discuss the merits of particular kinds of grain. Farming stock and produce

is such a field for observation, that we rarely find time to cram in another topic, and if we do get as far as the Irish Land Bill, we very soon find ourselves back again into a field of turnips. And why shouldn't we talk about what interests us most? If stock-brokers meet they talk about their bulls and their bears, and I know that the Queen likes to look at her cattle, for one Sunday her Majesty wanted to see a particular white bull, when the foreman had gone for a walk with the railway station-master, and Mr. Tait, the steward, had to lead the bull out himself. I suppose the bull was rather fresh, for he pulled Mr. Tait over, and I daresay that amused her Majesty as much as the bull; and, depend upon it, had the Queen of England her way in the matter, farmers would have been relieved long ago, for her Majesty is

deeply interested in the industry, and all that concerns it.

“Here they come!” exclaimed my sister, as my two daughters, dressed for the occasion, came down the hop-avenue. They were both dressed alike—white satine stripe, kilted, and made fashionably; light kid gloves, Princess Victoria hat, trimmed with white lace, and three maiden’s blush roses.

“Mark!” exclaimed my sister, “look at those tightly-fitting dresses. Do you allow it?”

“My dear,” I replied, “I have given it up as a bad job. With the ladies of the present day, it is follow my leader by easy stages from Mrs. Langtry to our servant, and follow they will. My daughters buy their own dresses and work for the money. It is not, perhaps, so much their fault as

it is the fault of those ladies who *should* set the pattern. We have the Æsthetic Society, who are going to revive old fashions, which will, perhaps, meet with your approbation ; but what I should like to see would be a happy medium, easily struck by the royal leaders of fashion, and which would be a boon to every sensible family."

"Well, my dears," said their aunt, "I like your hats, but how can you wear such tight dresses? I thought you would never stoop to this."

"Tight, aunt!" exclaimed Fanny. "I hope you don't call this tight. Wait until you see the Misses Aldridge. I assure you our dresses are quite loose and out of the fashion."

The conversation was speedily ended by the arrival of the curate, who joined us in

the arbour ; and, after exchanging civilities, I hastened to see that the stableman was in readiness to take the horses as the guests arrived. What was my surprise to find Mr. Bull and his daughter in their gig waiting outside.

“ Won’t get out. No, I thank you,” said Mr. Bull to my wife. “ Only came to see if the Squire’s likely to be here ; want to see him particular ; and Mary, she *would* come.”

“ Why, Mr. Bull,” I said, “ how glad I am to see you. Nonsense about not stopping. The Squire is coming, I know. Come along in. Here, Jack, take Mr. Bull’s horse in and give him a feed of corn.”

“ No, don’t shoot him out, young man. Shan’t stop a minute. Tie him up to the railings, and give him a bit of them vetches

if you like, but don't shoot him out, shan't stop a minute," repeated Mr. Bull, as he steadily descended from his gig with the aid of my arm, and then, all radiant with smiles and a blushing face, his fair daughter sprang into my arms, and our guests for the party were increased by two.

"Bless you, my dear," said Aunt Mary Ann, who had followed me from the summer-house; "and you are Mary Bull. I have so often heard of you. Come with me, my dear."

"May I, father?" inquired Mary.

"Yes, yes; just a minute. I've something to say to Mr. Hope, but don't be long," followed, and I led my neighbour Bull into my sanctum.

"Are you sure," inquired Mr. Bull, "that the Squire is a-coming, because it's only business, only business that I want

of him, and I thought you wouldn't mind my coming here ; but it's very particular, and when I makes my mind up, 'tis made up, and the sooner 'tis done the better."

"Can I help you?" I asked.

"No, no, no," said Mr. Bull. "Least-ways, one job will do for all. 'Tis or 'tis not to be, a word will do it. Now when the Squire comes, will you show him in here, and come in yourself, for it concerns you as much as it does me?"

"Mr. Bull, it shall be done as you wish ; and now whilst we are waiting, come and look at our garden and the roses."

"Oh, I've quite forgot. I've brought you some rose-buds," said my visitor. "Just tell your man to look under my gig and he will find them tied up. They are all old-fashioned roses, and I daresay they

won't be any count to you, but I couldn't bring what I hadn't got."

"My good sir," I replied, "they will be very acceptable, and more than that, they will ever hold their own as they have done. Their antiquity proves the admiration that has been bestowed on them by generations past. No rose has ever surpassed the moss rose-bud, and our old monthly friend blooms when all others are frostbitten and asleep."

"Who be they young men?" inquired Mr. Bull, as we came upon the two Misses Aldridge attired in Newmarket ulster coats, surmounted with pot hats.

"I don't see any men," I replied.

"Them two slim uns, with the tight umbrellas," further remarked my friend.

"They are not men," I answered; "they are Mr. Aldridge's daughters."

"Bless me!" said the old man. "Look at the pockets and buttons! I could have sworn they was men. What do 'em dress like that for?"

"Fashion," I replied, as the young ladies faced about and shook hands. Next we were introduced to a friend of theirs, dressed in the London livery, pale pink satine, trimmed with écru lace, kilted skirt, baby body, with epaulettes on sleeves, velvet band round the waist, pointed back and front, and silk gauntlette gloves, two snake bracelets on each arm, and I heard Fanny say next day that this young lady wore spoon bust stays, red stockings, and high-low shoes.

"What do you think of that one?" I inquired of Mr. Bull, when we were out of earshot.

"Never seed nothing like it before,"

said Mr. Bull ; “ but, I say,” he continued, whilst he sipped a drop of whiskey-and-water, and then nudged me on the arm, “ I say, she’s more like a mermaid nur a milkmaid. Ain’t she now ? ” and he burst into a merry laugh, which was interrupted by the arrival of more brother farmers, their wives, and daughters. They all brought some rose-buds, of which the gardener took charge, and then there was shaking of hands and such a carrying of chairs and stools as fully occupied all the young people of the male sex, of whom Mr. Lionel Douglas was the leader in lessons of politeness. Actually our clergyman drove down to bring us some rose-buds, and came in to have a business chat, as he called it, with me, the subject of which was the inequality of the ratable value of the whole of the property in the parish ;

and although I felt hardly at liberty to enter into the matter thoroughly just then, still I went so far as to say that I thought, that, having so much time on his hands, he was of all persons the very one to take up this vital question. My own farm is assessed according to my rental, but there are many farms still assessed at the old rental, and although large sums have been refunded, including half a year's rent twice on the property of a noble duke, there having been no permanent reduction in the rent, the assessment remains on the old sum, viz., the whole of the rental. I told the rev. gentleman that by taking up public matters like these, and by equalising our burdens, not forgetting the mansions, he would be doing good work, and would strengthen his position. He had barely left when

the Squire arrived, and I sent for Mr. Bull.

“Here I am, Hope,” said Sir Hugh; “and now I want to explain these rose-buds to you. Don’t let your gardener waste a single bud. Each lot is tied with the name on. Let us begin alphabetically. Alfred Colomb, Charles Lefebvre, Duke of Edinburgh, Duke of Wellington, Fisher Holms, Gloire de Dijon, Isabella Sprunt, Jean Liabaud, La France, Lord Beaconsfield, Maréchal Niel, M. Paul Neron, Prince Camille de Rohan, Souvenir de la Malmaison, and Thomas Mills; but of all roses give me the Duke of Wellington; it is not only a grand rose, but there is such a substance in the petals, and the perfume is lovely. Ah, Mr. Bull, glad to see you,” exclaimed the Squire as the farmer entered. “Mr. Hope tells me that

you want to see me. Take a seat. I see your illness has tried you. I was only thinking of you this morning, for your new lease came to hand, and now when that is signed, with the exception of Mr. Aldridge, who prefers to remain as a yearly tenant, that business will be complete."

"And the lease is the very thing I want to see you about," said Mr. Bull. "The fact is, I'm getting old and weared out, and I ain't fit to tackle these rough times, Squire. It wants a man to get about and work with the men as I used to, and one to be up afore 'em and always arter 'em, and upsides wi' 'em, and I can't do it; and they draws half as much money again as they used to do, and don't do half the work."

"And so you want to give it up, Mr. Bull?"

“No, sir. You hear me out first, please. Well, I must tell you that Mr. Hope’s David, as is minding my farm now whilst I be away, he has spoke for my daughter, and if you be a mind, and Mr. Hope here be a mind, I was thinking, sir, that we might get this new lease made out in his name. I’d take and hand it all over to ’em, and let ’em see what they could do with it. What d’ye say, gentlemen?”

“And what is to become of you, Mr. Bull?” inquired the Squire.

“Oh! I shall live along with them, and give them my advice, for that’s about all I be fit for now.”

“Then,” said the Squire, “if your son likes to wait on me in the morning, Mr. Hope, and make the request, I shall be only too happy to go through the condi-

tions with him, and get the lease altered accordingly ; but we have not heard your opinion yet."

"Gentlemen, I wish it was in my power to meet Mr. Bull's generous offer in a more even-handed manner. This, however, I will do, and that is to send David a flock } of two hundred sheep as a wedding gift. I will continue to give him my advice, and what help I can afford ; and although I shall lose him as a son, I shall still have him as a neighbour, and we will all try and work together to pay our rent and improve our holdings."

"Is your daughter here, Mr. Bull?" inquired our landlord ; "because I should like to be introduced to her."

"You will stay and take a cup of tea, Sir Hugh?" said my wife, who came to tell us that tea was ready.

“Certainly, Mrs. Hope. We have done our business. I will follow you.”

My wife was delighted with the honour of thus conducting our landlord to the tea-tent, and Mr. Bull followed them to find his daughter, whilst I took the coachman a pint of home-brewed ale, which I knew he would prefer to tea.

“Plenty of partridges, I see, sir,” said the coachman. “I hope to come and beat for you on the 1st September. Everybody said there wouldn’t be any game on Farnborough Hall when the tenant had the shooting, but I never saw such coveys dusting in the roads before.”

“You get the dogs exercised, coachman, and I’ll find you some sport in the woods presently, as well as in the turnips.”

I was just returning with the cup when I met the curate.

“Not going already, sir, I hope?” I remarked.

“Yes, Mr. Hope. I’m very sorry, but I have a sick person I promised to visit, and I must ask you to excuse me. Good-bye,” and he shook my hand and hurried away. I was sorry he had to leave so early, but with him I know duty stands before pleasure.

Mr. Bull had found his daughter and was introducing her to the Squire, who said :

“I am very happy to know you, and I am sure that had there been the least hesitation on my part in granting your request, Mr. Bull, the appearance of your daughter would have immediately decided the matter in your favour. I hope you will spend many happy years at the old farm, and that your father may recover

from his illness and live to be a comfort to you."

Poor Mary blushed deeply; emotion nearly stifled her voice, but she managed to say, "I hope, sir, that he may," and but for my sister coming to her rescue, I think she would have cried. I saw it all. I pitied the poor girl; and, calling her, I said: "Mary, can you drive and fetch David? Your horse is not shot out. Your father has said you may; tell him it is all right; the farm is to be yours." She could not speak, but she nodded a reply, and gladly escaped to go for her lover, and when they both appeared to receive the congratulations of our friends, two happier faces never looked this cold world more cheerfully in the face. Even Mr. Bull forgot all about his hurry to return, and smoked a long pipe in the arbour,

whilst Mr. Lionel Douglas Aldridge gave the young ladies lessons in budding. He was quite an adept in the matter, and I believe he budded better than the gardener.

Before the Squire left us, we drank his jolly good health in a bumper, and then we settled down to a quiet pipe in the arbour, whilst the ladies adjourned to the parlour to talk over servants and dresses and butter-making.

My friends congratulated me on the favourable appearance of my crops compared with those of Captain Jinks, the previous tenant. We all agreed that the corn was ripe, and I told them that on the morrow I intended to set on twenty hands to reap the wheat. Our station-master joined us between the trains, and the Squire told him, before us all, that he was pleased to hear of his intention

to help the farmers, "for," said he, "although my father opposed your railway in his day, I am willing to acknowledge the benefits that might arise to my tenants if the railway company was not so unbending. Stick up for us, sir," said he, "and if you have any difficulty with your managers come and see me. I have some influence with your board of directors, and will exert it on your behalf. It is local assistance that we require, from men of energy on the spot. Red tape is the besetting sin of all large companies. Civility and accommodation are the passport for road carriers, and depend upon it that the public will remonstrate with the shareholders ere long for treating us and our traffic as a thing they can do without, and ignoring all the obligations to a hard-working body, the backbone of England."

We got to the Irish Land Bill, and unanimously agreed that the English farmers, who had been a law-abiding body, were deserving of speedy measures to put them on an equal footing with the sister island. We agreed that Cæsar was a good man, who had been led astray by his land-agent, and we went so far as to say that a sensible land-agent who understood his business and supported the tenants was a better master than an upstart landlord who knew nothing of our difficulties; but we were unanimous in our opinion that Sir Hugh Power was a man of a thousand, encouraging us to invest our last penny in the improvement of our land, and that if we could not farm under him, then farming would be at an end so far as tenant-farmers in Old England were concerned.

There was one, and one only, drawback to our pleasure, and that was the absence of my daughter Laura, who had been obliged to go to her room with a severe headache. The Squire had inquired for the book-keeper, but she was too unwell to come forward. However, when we adjourned to the house we found her at the piano, and she added to our entertainment by playing some of her best and newest music. The other young ladies played and sang too. George gave us a recitation, and then called upon Mary Bull to sing us a song. Poor Mary had not learned to sing to the piano, and modestly declined; but, her father insisting on her doing her best, she sang, to the general admiration, including even the lady in the London livery, "The Old Soldier's Daughter." She has a beautiful voice, and

for my part I must say, that, if a woman can sing, there is no necessity for any thumps on a piano to drown her best notes. The song was appropriate to her trials of the day, and everyone felt it to be so. My sister was perfectly charmed. She rushed to embrace her, and taking the valuable gold chain that she had been wearing from her own neck, she placed it round the neck of Mary Bull, exclaiming : "There, my dear ! Wear that for my sake, for our poor mother's sake, and never let it go out of the Hope family. David, my boy," continued my generous sister, "I hear that you are to be married on Old Michaelmas Day. I think the day is a very suitable one, and on that day your Aunt Mary Ann will send you a score of bullocks. I hope, my dear, it will be an acceptable gift, for I was always told

as a girl that to a tenant-farmer stock is as good as money."

My farmer friends agreed that my sister was "a brick," and would insist on drinking *her* health, to which she replied in the following words: "I thank you very much, and although it is not expected that a lady shall return thanks, I will say that many can help the one, and I hope we shall all live to help one another."

Mr. Lionel sadly wanted to come and do some more budding on the morrow, but as Mr. Aldridge also contemplated commencing harvest, our gardener was left in possession of the buds, and a week's hard tedious work before him, work that I should never have the patience to accomplish; but I am convinced that gardening is a labour of love, and one of the most beauti-

ful studies, never-ending, and remunerative to boot.

The rubbers on the hooks roused me from my slumbers on the following morn, and, book in hand, I set all the men to work and earned a good breakfast before eight o'clock. I even turned the horses out, and gave the carters a chance of earning a pound, until there should be space to plough between the shocks. One of the finest opportunities of killing the weeds is often lost by not sticking the plough in immediately the corn is clear. Never mind how hard the ground is, for what is the value of a few broken ploughshares compared with a week's hot sun on a parcel of weeds, which is certain death to them, and makes a splendid tilth for turnips, and mustard, or any other crop, directly there

comes a rainfall? "Never lose an opportunity" should be a motto to be suspended in every farmer's bedroom, and it might cause him to get up occasionally when he feels inclined for an extra half-hour.

As regards the harvesters, my patience was sadly tried. I do not hesitate to say that in years gone by one good man would cut as much corn in the twenty-four hours as two of the men we now get for harvest men; and as to picking it up and tying the sheaves, you would think that some of them had never seen a sheaf of corn before. I grumbled, and they struck work, and coming to me in a body, said that if I wanted small sheaves tied and to have it done my way, they should want another 2s. per acre. I could not give that, because it would be in contradiction

to my arrangement with other farmers, so I came to terms with them by going back to the old-fashioned system of a piece of bacon and a little beer money, and they went to work satisfied, and did their work properly by the constant supervision of myself and George ; for what is the good of sticking up large sheaves that will never ripen, or that will never get dry should there come a storm, and so spoil an otherwise good sample of corn ? The gamekeeper had his work cut out to look after our game, and for the first time in my life I was interested in preserving them from the hooks of my mixed company of faggers. One man had a dog, which I made him tie up at the farm ; another had some wires to set in the runs and catch the young pheasants ; of which we deprived him ; and, to the annoyance of the whole company, we

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drove the game from a square piece of corn, which they were carefully lessening with their hooks to surround the occupants. The weather continued very fine, and I looked anxiously at the weather-glass and at the corn. I had the barns thrown open and the bottom of the corn sheds bedded, and the moment I thought it would do we pitched into the carrying business might and main. Everybody but Mr. Bull said we were too fast; but this was an exceptional year, no grass amongst the straw to hurt. The first day we filled our four corn sheds, because it was hardly fit for the barn, and corn must be in good order, as dry as a rattle, for the barn. These corn sheds are most excellent buildings; an ordinary-sized one can be built for 40*l.*, and I wonder there are not more about. There is a dry roofing for your corn if you can

only get it there, the ends and sides are open, and I think that in these days of field thrashing, straw-selling, and labour-economising, it would be an immense convenience to all farmers to have some of them erected at different points of the land. Further, with a little boarding they could be used as dining-stables for the plough teams in the winter, and would save many a poor horse from taking the influenza by standing in the open field, whilst the carter has his dinner and the horse takes a chill; but the builder who stacks the corn in these sheds should be very careful to keep the middle full, thus to give the sheaves a fall outwards, or a driving rain will find its way to the interior. My harvest "side" was composed of the four strong men whom, it will be remembered, I employed from the beginning, one man

a total abstainer, myself and George, and a casual hand. We got into the second day, and I was pushing the men when the spokesman addressed me as follows :

“Master, how about a drop of beer ? It is very close to-day, and my shirt is as if it had been dipped in a pail of water.”

“You know our bargain,” I replied, “namely, 1s. per day instead of beer.”

“Yes,” said the man, “but the wagons come in uncommon thick, and you never said anything about the horses trotting all the while. Three shillings a day and 1s. for beer from daylight to dark, ain’t trotting price, master.”

The Good Templar made no remark, but kept steadily on.

“How about it, master,” said another man, as he leisurely mounted a load of sheaves, and whilst yet another one stood

half in the barn, and my son George pitching in the field, and very soon likely to wait for wagons. -

“Yes, how about it?”

Now, should this meet the eye of some strong advocate for total abstinence, he will say: “Weak man, there should not have been a moment’s hesitation. Men don’t perspire beer. Why did you not provide tea, or oatmeal and water? You agreed with your brother farmers, and why not adhere to that agreement?”

So far, so good, but the meaning of the word “stimulate” is to goad, to spur on, to prick, to excite, to animate, to encourage, to impel, to urge, to irritate, forwards; and I, as a tenant-farmer, openly say that when the thermometer registers ninety degrees in the shade, when the corn is ripe, when the farmer’s interest

and the labourer's interest are no longer one, when the landlord's rent and the tenant's welfare depend on the proper housing of that corn, and when the unwilling assistants, whom the farmer has to bear with, themselves place the question of a pint or two of wholesome home-brewed ale between their being cheerful willing assistants and disagreeable hogs, who would not hesitate to swear openly at you, or stick a prong into you, why, I tell such people to mind their own business, or pay my rent for me. What is the good of stopping the churn when the butter is coming? What is the value of a man's estate when he is drowning for the want of a raft? What is the use of our working hard for eleven months, and then losing the gloss off our labour for the sake of a cask of home-brewed ale? So out came the ale and

bread-and-cheese, and in went the corn with the greatest ease. The only man who did not put himself about was my teetotal labourer, and he generally kept a wagon waiting behind him whilst he leisurely unloaded his, when it came to his turn to unload. My most willing assistant was a promiscuous applicant for work, a gentleman in distress, I should say. There is nothing like a greyhound dog to kill rats. No such horse to draw at a dead pull as a thoroughbred, and no one who handles a prong so lightly and so quickly as a gentleman, if you can only get him to take to it.

I missed David, who was devoting the whole of his time to the collection and housing of Mr. Bull's corn. Mr. Aldridge rode round to see how we were getting on, expressed his opinion that we were hurrying it too much, and told me that as his corn

was in such good condition, he had ordered the thrashing-machine, for he intended to thrash it in the field, as he wanted some straw and chaff.

Oh! that delusive thrashing-machine! A dusty, rusty, fusty set of machinery that no one looks at nine months of the year, but which at harvest time farmers fall down and worship! The man who owns it can't get a yard in the corn market without someone catching his sleeve. "I say," says an applicant, "when be you coming to wait on me? Mind, don't disappoint, for we ain't got a mossle of straw." "I say," says another, "how is it your gang didn't come on Thursday as promised? I see you be thrashing another field for Smith; that ain't fair, and I haven't got a morsel of chaff for my horses." "I say, governor, I've got a lawyer's letter in my pocket,

and if I don't get some corn into this market at once I shall have a writ and an execution," is what nobody says ; but unfortunately that is too often the case, and the man who owns the machine waits on his best customers first ; and the needy man must either pay extra or wait his turn.

The few who do get the machine at the right time are thus enabled to turn grain and straw into immediate cash. It is a saving of labour and a saving of time and expense ; but, if, during this catching season of 1881, the thrashing-machine was debited with all the losses of her unhappy worshippers, she would have a very long score to pay. It would take her years of hard labour to repay it.

"How are you getting on, father?" said David, on the Saturday afternoon. "We

have got all Mr. Bull's wheat in, and two men up ladders thatching the last rick. Mr. Bull won't have his barley cut; he does not like the look of the weather-glass."

Neither did I, and my best field of barley was out, and it was fit to pick up. All my wheat was in, and I had made one barley-rick. There was yet a large barn empty, for I did not think the last field of wheat was in good enough order for the barn.

The men had asked to leave off, when they had finished the barley-rick, which they topped up with two loads of loose rushes, and well raked down, to run the rain off; and, as they had been working very very hard, I could not refuse them. They came in a body for their money.

"Master," said the spokesman, "we want

to speak to you. Will you lend us the horses and carriage to-morrow to go and see the 'sleeping girl'? We will pay you 10s. for the use on't."

Now there was a time when I should have said, "Confound your impudence!" As it was, the impudent request somewhat staggered me. To fancy for one moment that I would let two valuable young horses and our best carriage to a set of rowdies to go on the Sunday twenty miles each way, up hill and down dale, to see a sleeping girl! It was a good job I was smoking; and, although it is a bad habit for a farmer to smoke when he does not allow his men to do so, still a puff or two gave me time to think. And I must here remark that these are thinking times. The labourer is no longer a smock-frock, church-going, steady dependent, but

he is an independent careless fellow. He knows his value at harvest time, and he asserts his right to the utmost. Having so far shaken off the fetters of servility, he is not going back to his old habits. He is, in a measure, like a greyhound dog let loose, and he will jump all the gates of previous exclusion in your face. For a time he will take his Sunday drives, as thousands of town labourers now do, and he will spend all his money on clothes for himself and his family, and fall on his club when he is in trouble. Later on he will see the folly of this, and demand something more substantial; but we have to deal with the present, not forgetting that in England we can meet the case halfway, whereas abroad Jack is as good as his master, and walks into your house as if he did you a favour by coming at

all. Bend we must, and we had better do it gracefully, not forgetting that we in our turn are gaining ground in precisely the same way. If a farmer requires a farm, he has no longer to curry favour or present or promise a cheque to the agent for the refusal of one. He is not compelled to sign prohibitive conditions. In fact, he has his own way, in a far wider sense than the labourer. Even at Aylesbury we read of Lord Carington, a large landed proprietor, addressing the Royal Central Bucks Agricultural Association, to the effect that "the immediate relief to tenant-farmers must come from the landlords." If, therefore, we receive concessions in the right hand, we must expect to give them with the left. It is no more pleasing for a landlord, who has been accustomed to receive the greatest of submission and

civility from his tenant, to have to go to him and beg of him to keep the farm on at a low rental, than it was for me to be asked to let my only conveyance to my labourers. I allow for this. "Compromise" is the term for it—compromise. With a view to this, I said :

"Well, my lads, I am quite satisfied with the help you have given me to get my corn in so far, but I can't agree to let you my carriage to drive about on the Sunday; but I will tell you what I will do. There is still a field of ripe barley out, and if you like to pitch into that now and get it into the barn, I will drive you all myself on Monday, and pay you for the day into the bargain."

"What say, mates?" inquired the spokesman.

"Give us a bit of supper, master?" said another.

"Yes," I replied. "There is a piece of nice salt beef and some carrots. It shall be served up when you are half through."

"Then we'll do it, master, if Master George and Master David will help."

"We will help," answered both my sons, and very soon the beautiful sample of barley was rattling into the barn.

How my wife and daughters laughed at my undertaking to drive a lot of men to see a sleeping girl; but never mind, let those laugh who lose. Those who win are sure to laugh. I never saw a lot of men work with a better spirit, and the sleeping girl little thought she was the cause of doing me an immense amount of good. I owe the poor girl a good turn

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for this;—but I will tell you about her.

Sunday morning broke in upon us before we finished. It was the first time in my life that I had carried corn on the Sabbath. I remember an ironmaster who bought land in our late neighbourhood and carried corn on the Sabbath. Very strong, indeed, were the expressions used against him. There are staunch old farmers now who say, "I never did do it, and I never will." Such men would rather lose the whole of their property. There was one particular Sunday this year when wheat was fit to carry, and if carried it would have been worth 60s. to 65s. per quarter. It was not carried, and what was the consequence? The rain came and the wheat grew out. If that wheat was thrashed now, a corn dealer would offer

36s. per quarter for it. Calculate twenty acres of wheat averaging five quarters per acre at, to be within bounds, 20s. per quarter the less, and that farmer paid 100*l.* for observing the Sabbath-day, whilst the railway company, who won't help him, ran excursion-trains to the sea-side for the benefit of his and other people's employés.

It is not for me to attempt a theological discussion. It is the duty of the clergy to direct us, and one clergyman in our neighbourhood preached a sermon bearing on the matter for two Sundays in succession. His first text was, Romans xii. 11: "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." On the second Sunday, the one I refer to, he said. "I see amongst my congregation several farmers whose corn is ripe, and in a

condition to harvest. This weather is the gift of Almighty God, sent that we might harvest our corn. It is lawful that we should avail ourselves of the opportunity to collect the fruits of the earth in times of necessity. This is a time of necessity. I tried to explain the passages in the Scripture bearing on the point to you on Sunday last. I fearlessly say that it is trifling with the blessing now offered you, to neglect the golden opportunity, although it is the Sabbath-day."

Such a clergyman I consider to be an ornament to his profession. A handful of help is worth a bushel of pity. His voice would be the key-note for the labourers, and at a special day for thanksgiving his church bell will not toll in vain.

On the Sunday night down came the rain, not in drops, but in pailsful. Unthatched stacks were perforated with it, corn lying on the ground was beaten to the earth ready to sprout, muggish weather set in, and such a disastrous conclusion to a gleam of sunshine shining on the English farmer was never known to me. There was only one thing that saved me, and that was the fact of my having taken a light farm where the corn ripened as it did, and was fit to carry just one week before the majority of the other growing corn. It was an exciting race, an illustration of the game of hazard that the English farmer has been playing for now five years. It has not been farming; it has been gambling, gambling with our capital with terrific odds against us. Is it always going to be so? What

has become of our old-fashioned weather? A tenant-farmer had needs be a magician these days. Attend a corn-market now, and the length of men's faces tells you at a glance who won and who lost. See the fortunate men swing their sample bags about and proudly exhibit the quality of their corn, of which they make from 60s. to 70s. per eight bushels; and then see some unlucky man touch a miller or a corn-dealer on the arm and quietly pass him a sample of grains, which is as quietly and more speedily passed back to him with an audible, "No, thank you; full of that." For the first week the millers bought up the damp wheat, washed only by the rain running through the stack, at a fairish price—50s. to 60s., and they shot it sack and sack with very dry foreign; in a few days the one

absorbs the moisture from the other and improves both qualities. Once he has worked off this foreign corn, and can get a good sample of home-grown wheat, the miller knows what is best for himself and his bakers ; besides, he would never be able to work this wet stuff over these new porcelain rollers, and it must stay until it gets dry. Stay for how long ? Some say March, some say May, and those who can hold it won't thrash until next summer, by which time the grown corn will be rotten and will blow away with the tailings.

I started with my men in the farm wagonette between the showers on Monday. As we turned the corner we met Mr. Aldridge on horseback, and my men set up a "hip, hip, hurrah !" much to my annoyance, for I don't like to be

uncharitable. There stood his corn in the fields, and the thrashing-machine and engine covered with rick-cloths. You should have heard the merciless epithets that the men applied to him and his attempt to save labour. They hoped the corn would rot in the field, and declared that not one of them would go to help thrash, were he to come and beg of them to do so.

George came with us, whilst David engaged to look after the cattle at home; and we enjoyed the ride. Before we came to each farm, I predicted "corn in" or "corn out," knowing as I do the nature of the soil and the nature of the tenant-farmer. I was right in nearly every instance. The smart men had their corn housed, and the men who were poor, in want of funds and energy, together with

the gentlemen's stewards, were behind. It was a sad picture, and it would have been sadder had I then known the weather that was to follow. Corn stood in some instances in the fields in shocks for a month; the straw looked as black as old thatch, and the tops as green as grass in many many instances, before that corn was housed, another Sunday being the only day in the interim when it was in good order to carry.

At last we arrived at the village where the notorious sleeping girl lives. The men determined to have their dinner before paying her a visit, so George and I took the opportunity of paying the first. She lives, if lying prostrate be called living, in a poor labourer's cottage with her sister, who is married to a farm labourer, and who has two little children. My farm

assistants made several inquiries of people in the neighbourhood as to the girl's case. Some said it was a "regler himposition ;" some that she "warn't asleep, and never had been ;" and one old woman stated that the family had two banking accounts, and that her late mother took her drops and her father-in-law did no work. The girl's mother had died suddenly, and her (the girl's) sister had claimed to protect her ; in fact, she had removed her from her father-in-law's roof to the cottage where we saw her, which had brought about a family wrangle, and no doubt gave rise to many uncharitable remarks. At one time there is no doubt that the poor girl was a subject of notoriety. It was said that on one particular Sunday no less than eighteen vehicles brought people of the lower order to view the sleeping girl, and

that, although there was no charge for admission, it was supposed that most of the visitors gave the mother money. It was also stated that the mother had placed the sister, under whose care she now is, in a grocer's shop, and that money had been lost in that way by giving credit. From the poverty-stricken appearance of the village, I do not wonder at such being the case, and no doubt the debtors themselves would be the last persons to acknowledge that they had benefited indirectly by their neighbour's affliction.

A very deaf old woman answered the door, and on five chairs in the living-room lay the sleeping girl, as she is called. She is twenty-four years of age and pale as death, five feet five inches in height, and when she was removed last she measured

only nine-and-a-half inches round the waist. Her left eye is open and her right eye closed. Her right arm she can move, but her left is useless; legs *vice versa*, I believe. She appears to have all her senses now, and can converse in a very low whisper, as one recovering from a bad cold. We could not make the old woman hear, and were, therefore, induced to approach her chair-bedside and to converse with her. The two little children (she is but a child herself, so far as this world goes) had evidently been playing with her; and, being unable herself to read or to write, the presence of these little nieces must help her through the long dreary hours of bedridden affliction.

“I’ve got a dear, good sister,” said the poor girl. “She carries me downstairs every day and lays me here; but she has

a terrible job sometimes, as my limbs are stiff and the staircase is narrow. She has gone out to lease some corn."

Presently, and to our relief, the sister came in with a handful of corn, and placing it on the table, she answered our questions as to her sister, who appears to be no older than fourteen years. She told us that she had slept for ten years, and that all she took during that time was liquids; that eight months after her mother died, some shock, for which they cannot account, perhaps in moving, aroused her from her slumber, and that it took three people to hold her; that she was then conscious for some months before she could speak; that she had forgotten all about her mother, and had no idea she had been sleeping so long. Many doctors have visited her, and their directions have

been followed, excepting the order of a French doctor, that she shall eat white snails collected in the morning and swallowed alive. Her spine is curved. They think of moving this Michaelmas. The clergy there are said to be very poor, and without even a servant themselves. The poor girl evidently requires fresh air, and a suitable conveyance to be drawn out in. I hope that, where they go next, they will meet with friends who will provide this conveyance, and so give the poor invalid a chance to get well, and the curious a frequent opportunity of seeing an afflicted person without making a show of her body and a mockery of her relatives, who have never claimed any parish allowance for her.

CHAPTER II.

MY readers must not suppose that I carried the whole of my corn before the rain came. I do not think there was a farmer in England who did so. I still had two fields of barley standing, and a miserable crop of oats mown to the ground. The oats were of very little value before they were cut, and now they are in the stack I really do not know what they are fit for, unless to cut into chaff for the cattle in the winter. The standing barley took very little harm, and, as I left it until the weather cleared up, it will be a very fair

sample, but not bright enough for malting. But I am forgetting myself when I talk about brightness for malting, as brewers and maltsters no longer buy the best barley, unless they get it at the ordinary price, which means a loss to us at from 8s. to 10s. per eight bushels. Forty-two pounds weight is now the standard for a bushel of malt, so you will readily see, that, so long as there are not too many grown corns, it is a matter of indifference to the maltster as to the quality of the barley being superfine. Formerly, you must know, the duty was charged on the barley in bulk. After it had been soaked, it was shovelled into a vessel called a "couch," and there "squared." Good or bad the duty was the same, and, therefore, it was to the interest of the maltster to malt only that quality from which the most saccharine could be pro-

duced. The alteration in the law reduces the quality to be used to a mathematical calculation, and that calculation has already resulted in other than the best samples being accepted for malting purposes, the moment the best barley cannot be procured at feeding price,—or foreign malt purchased to save the trouble of malting at home. Thus the English farmer has lost one of his bonuses, and the English labourer is likely to lose employment, owing to some deep-laid scheme, the birth of which is not only a mystery to me, but to every farmer with whom I have conversed on the subject. Still, it is said that the farmers themselves agitated for, and were the means of, the malt duty being taken off. If so, they must have been led blindfolded to the slaughter, for the loss of from 8s. to 10s. per quarter

on best bright barley to the English farmer is the only alteration that has been made; inasmuch as, before the malt duty was taken off, a farmer was allowed to make malt for his cattle duty free, on giving notice to the Excise. Whom, then, does it benefit? The American and the brewer, not the poor man, for his beer is just the same price as ever, and when Mr. Brewer has had time to test and to adapt his plant to scaling Indian corn, or to the utilisation of rice and other grain, and has carefully studied saccharinology, barley will be cast to the swine, and the parliamentary brewer will, like other trades, have taken a lift at the expense of the farmer. The landed proprietors have allowed both the poor man and themselves to be gulled to such a ridiculous alteration, to benefit only the foreigner and the brewer. But the

blunder has been made, and its correction should be one of the tenant-farmers' early measures. Here are we, able to grow the finest barley in the world, and, like the paper-makers of old, we are not content with our laws until they are so altered as to let the foreigner step in and take the bread out of our mouths without the slightest *quid pro quo*.

My neighbour's corn was, of course, unfit for thrashing in the field. The proprietor of the thrashing-machine was glad to come and thrash for me. I have made from 62s. to 68s. per quarter on my wheat. Mr. Aldridge was somewhat chaffed at market in consequence of his having missed the fine weather for the collection of his wheat, which really was in splendid order. He did not relish it at all, and took himself, wife, and daughters off to the sea-side,

leaving Mr. Lionel Douglas in charge of the farm, who, in contradiction to my advice, *would* carry the wheat before it was dry. It will be unfit to thrash until next Lady Day, or at any rate until the wind shall have got pretty well through the stacks to complete the drying. Our chaff is very good. I tread it tightly into a vermin-proof house, and mix a little cattle-spice with it at the same time. There is no difficulty in making 65s. per ton of the straw, and I am cutting flap rushes and fern, wherever I can get it, to make a large stack of litter for the cattle in the winter.

I notice that, in a leading article, one of the agricultural papers remarks: "It is, however, gratifying to learn that labourers are beginning to be more moderate in their demands, and it is suggested that

the present harvest has been, so far as labour is concerned, one of the cheapest on record." I entirely disagree with that observer, not as regards the fact that the harvest has been collected at less expense, but as regards its being gratifying.

The farmer is never doing so well as when he can afford to give such a price for his harvest-work as will enable his labourers to put by a pound or two for the winter. This year the labourer has gone back to the old price, and, bearing in mind his expensive habits, his clothing, and schooling, I look forward to a very heavy poor-rate and an unusual amount of distress amongst the agricultural population in the forthcoming winter, as the outcome of our cheap labour this harvest.

Mr. Gladstone, too, in speaking about farming, based his calculation on the

assumption that, because there had been a less yield during the past bad seasons, there had been a proportionate diminution of expense in the collection of the corn. Those estimates are incorrect, inasmuch as any practical man well knows that in a bad rainy season the expense of farm work exceeds the same in a favourable season. Steam cultivating not only was money thrown away, on account of the farmers not being able to follow the cultivator and clear the ground of the weeds it had rooted up, but it left the ground in a worse state than ever, and assisted the weeds, the couch especially, by ploughing and opening the ground to a depth some inches below the usual plough mark, where they could not previously enter, but into which they have rooted, and from which it will be a double difficulty

afterwards to exterminate them. To a crop of thistles, which always root to fabulous depths below the surface, a steam-cultivator (which does not cut them off) is a positive propagation. Then, as regards labourers, it is well known that in "catchy" seasons it is imperative on the part of the farmer to keep a number of men hanging about his farm in readiness to carry the corn should the weather clear up. Many of these men are extra hands, who would be paid off were it not for the rainy season. These men do not earn their salt whilst they are so waiting, but they have to be paid, and their maintenance is a tax on the farmer, which forces him to transfer some of Mr. Gladstone's figures to the Dr. instead of the Cr. side of the balance-sheet. It is a tax, too, that is constantly paid by every farmer, and one

that we should do well to consider. There is no trader in Europe who pays for so much waste labour as the English farmer. To name the shortest time, there are always four months in the year when a farmer's horses and men earn nothing. Some farmers send the horses to plough when they had better be in the stable, and the expense of maintaining ditches and hedgerows has to answer for the day men, but very often the farmer does not really know what to set the men at.

I would ask any of you to look round the neighbourhood where you live, and then to ask yourselves the question: "Who are the farmers who have best withstood this tempestuous storm of agricultural depression?" Having named them, I think you will find that the men are, for the most part, those who have combined some other

business with that of farming, and *not* the people you would select as the best farmers, who give their whole time and attention to farming, and to farming only. Sometimes they have been cattle-dealers, hay-and-straw-dealers, proprietors of steam-tackle, butchers, land-agents, corn-dealers, rate-collectors, milkmen, market - gardeners, artificial manure and insurance agents, horse-dealers, road-makers, carmen, ay, even butter and cheese makers;—always they have had some staple industry besides the mere ploughing and sowing of land.

It would be perfectly impossible for very many large shops and houses of business to carry on their business without their ready-money customers. The tradesman could not possibly grant the landowner a twelve-months' account, unless the labourer brought his scanty earnings to

his till the moment he received it. He could not pay his own labour; he could not meet his bills; and he charges my lord an extra price to pay interest, and looks with satisfaction at the account in his ledger. When these large accounts drop in, he pays his rent, buys advantageously for his ready-money customers, and calculates his gain. The large customer is his savings-bank, and should he fail, as a rev. gentleman, a large landed proprietor, has lately done in this neighbourhood, he carries destruction with him as the fall of a huge tree amid saplings.

Farming, as it has been conducted in this country for the past forty years, has had no ready-money customers; there has been no till to go to for wages, and the crops have been all yearly customers. It cannot continue thus. There must be a

supplement. Mark the downward progress of Ireland since the looms disappeared from the cottages.

In 1858 I visited Ireland. Lord Downshire took me over some part of his estate, and introduced me to his farm-tenants. His lordship was a real farmer, and dressed in knee-breeches and gaiters. With paddle in hand, we visited farms and cottages, stopping always to cut up a thistle if we met with one. I stayed some time with a Mr. Beattie, of Banbridge. His house-keeper and servant milked the cows and fed the pigs before preparing the breakfast, and they wore shoes only as full dress. The labourers worked for 1s. per day and skimmed milk, wore no shoes, and invariably lay down when their master was out of sight. They were at that time weeding potatoes with short-handled forks,

and rolling grass into little wads with their hands to make hay of it, increasing the wad or cock as the sun dried it. I could not understand how they lived on 1s. per diem until I visited the cottages, where we found all the women busy weaving tablecloths and such like, manufactured from flax grown on the farm. Machinery robbed these poor people of their occupation, and the farmers were not able to take it in hand in opposition to the manufacturers, who have no interest in manufacturing home produce, and whose price for the raw material is not sufficiently remunerative to the farmer to enable him to employ the women to assist with the growth of flax to the same extent as he (the original manufacturer) did ; consequently machinery was a loss to them without a compensative gain.

Our connection with foreign parts has already made it compulsory that the farming of the future shall be a matter of business. We must take less pleasure and leisure out of it, and we must add some ready-money industry to it. It will never do for the country to become barren of labour, because we cannot employ our men throughout the winter. Absence of manual labour means starvation in the end, both for landlord and tenant ; therefore arises the question : "How are we profitably to employ this waste labour, thus to make it the means of ready-money to keep the farm going?" I would ask you to accept the idea as suggestive, rather than dictative, and to see what raw material there is at hand capable of being turned into cash by the employment of either machinery or horse-power, manual labour, women's labour,

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children's labour, or, indeed, the employment of the whole. Each county or district has its peculiarities. Universal laws or ideas will not meet the case. I merely mention the following rough ideas as occurring to me at the moment.

There is often a quantity of road scrapings or sand, which can be drawn together, and, once it is screened, finds a ready sale at from three shillings and sixpence to five shillings per square yard, according to the neighbouring facilities for obtaining building sand. Rough hands could turn to and deliver enough to pay horse hire and labour.

Some farms have good clay beds on them. The clay for making bricks is dug in the winter, and the coal, ashes, etc., can be drawn in the winter. The bricks, also, can often be delivered

at convenient times. If it is a woodland district, why not turn one's attention to the manufacture of fire-kindlers, which find a ready sale in the towns, and may be delivered to suit the convenience of the farmer? At the present time the halfpenny bundles of firewood which are sold in our neighbourhood are made from imported timber, split by machinery with a lifting splitter somewhat similar to the old-fashioned hand tool with which we formerly chopped swedes in the field. The timber-dealer who makes them employs as many as ten pairs of hands, who collect the pieces, put them in a vice, and, having squeezed them tight, tie them with tar-twine. All this might be done with wood grown on or near a farm.

Every farmer should study the component parts of artificial manure. He

can dissolve bones or coprolite, and with a very slight knowledge he could be busily engaged with the manufacture of that useful assistant at a time when his people cannot work in the field. Corn-dealers would always be glad to buy their chaff ready cut, and, once a farmer had a name for a good mixture, in the proper mixing and cutting of this daily requisite he would find a lot of winter work. A load of chaff could be delivered at any time, and a load of stable manure on the return journey is good back carriage; but it does not pay to go to the town purposely for it. He should make his own sheep-hurdles. He should store, sort, and retail potatoes, make string, prepare thatch for his ricks, and he might even turn his attention to the preserving of fruit or pickling of onions and cauliflowers. An acre of small onions

would not only fill a lot of bottles, but it would give employment to women for months in the winter, when labour is scarce and wages are low. When we compare the habits of the ploughman with those of his wife, it becomes a question of finding work of some kind for her to do. In the winter-time he leaves his home before it is light, and, tied to his plough-handles for the day, he never sees his children from week's end to week's end, as he does not reach home until they are asleep. Once his wife has seen the children to school and brushed round the scanty furniture, she has nothing to do. The tally-man may call to induce her to invest in a smart dress, or she may stand at her doorway and gossip with her neighbour. If the idea of pickling onions is too ridiculous, then devise other means; but labour of some kind should be offered



to these people. They have time to do it. If, instead of teaching cookery at our School Boards, some handicrafts were imparted both to boys and girls, in accordance with the trades of the districts, I think they would find them more useful in after life than accomplishments. Helplessness is the germ of poverty; a trade is never lost; and although good cooking may be a very necessary accomplishment, I have always understood "First catch your hare and then cook it." You may say: "But what ready-money handicraft are you going to adopt at Farnborough Hall?" Why, the osiers, the rods. I grow about twenty acres of osiers, and I have determined not to sell them, but to manufacture bushel-baskets, hampers, and such like, on the farm, and to sell the manufactured article. I shall engage a basket-maker to come and

teach those who are willing to turn their hand to the business. The promise of regular work will secure a good man, who will be available for other work when I require him. I shall arrange for him to live on the premises, and to give the two carter-boys, the cow-boy, and the shepherd-boy lessons in basket-making in the evening. Directly the poor boys can make a basket they shall be paid for their work. It was always distressing to me to see a strong growing lad depending on from 3s. 6d. to 5s. per week for his food, and, perhaps, dining off a swede or a turnip at the end of the week. Many a time have I robbed my mother's larder to take a carter-boy a dinner, and now, if I can help them to a few extra shillings by means of a handicraft, I will do it. The boys will soon learn the art, and in rough weather, when

they are not wanted with the horses, they can work piecework at the hampers and baskets. A very large proportion of our hampers are of foreign make, and surely if I grow the osiers I can compete with the foreigner.

In Buckinghamshire I know of three farms where the farmers have been unable to keep on, and the three have been taken by a chairmaker. Again, I know of a fellmonger who has bought a considerable quantity of land and is farming it himself. Both these people have bitten their fingers during the two years they have been farming, and whether they wish themselves out of it or not, it proves that a trade of some kind has been the secret of their success. A farmer has any amount of leisure time, a free house, and room enough to conduct any business to which he thinks proper to turn his attention. His poultry,

again, have never received any attention. They run the farm, it is true, and are kicked about from one place to the other, often doing more damage than they do good. Very often their living is "promiscuous," and very rarely their dwelling is warm and comfortable. Useless old hens are kept from Michaelmas to Lady Day without laying an egg, whereas a like quantity of well-selected pullets would eat no more food, and, provided with warmth, they would lay eggs when eggs are scarce.

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A few days before the 1st of September, the Squire called to say that he should like to shoot on my farm on the First. He asked if we should mind finding the luncheon, and sent a hamper of wine with his compliments.

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My orchard stands on half an acre of

ground; the trees were laden with fruit, and when I was thinking of buying some flats (I can make them myself when the rods come in), a fruit-dealer, Mr. Benny, called to offer to buy them, giving, at the same time, permission for us to store a reasonable quantity for our own use. I gave him permission to go round the orchard to look at them.

“This was a fine orchard once,” remarked Mr. Benny; “but just you see, sir, how many trees have died, or have been cut down, and have never been replaced, just for the sake of a shilling per tree, at which price you can get young trees. It is the case everywhere. I travel for twenty miles round, and I don’t know of a dozen perfect orchards. If this goes on we shall lose all our best old-fashioned apples in time; and just see what an orchard brings in when

we get a fruit year. I reckon, sir, that there should be twenty-one more trees in this orchard, and if they are planted properly, they will be in good bearing condition in ten years. I wonder the landlords don't see to this. They are fast enough sticking elm and oak-trees into the hedgerows, but they don't look after these fruit-trees, which make a farm valuable. What might you ask for these apples, sir?"

"Fifteen pounds," I replied; "but I thought of marketing them myself."

"I will give you ten pounds," he said, "and it would cost you very nearly all that to get your ladders and baskets; besides, it wants men to gather apples who understand it, and you want to be in the know with these London chaps. I am pretty careful; but look, here is a bill of thirty-four pounds just come

back with 'no effects' from an apple-dealer, all hard-earned money of mine. Upon my word, sir, I don't know what the world is coming to, for you don't know who is safe and who is not nowadays."

"Which," I inquired, "do you consider to be the best of apples to plant?"

"The Blenheim Orange, Flower of Kent, Lord Suffield, Wellington Pippin, Fern's Pippin, Ripston Pippin, Scarlet Fair Maid, and Russets."

"You have named eight, Mr. Benny. Bring me three trees of each kind and it is a bargain."

"Very well, sir; but you are rather hard. Here," said he, "is the cash," handing over two five-pound notes, and the apples were his.

"Now tell me," I asked, "what is the best way to plant these young trees?"

“I will, sir. I will tell you how the best orchard I know was planted. The apple-tree never ought to root below the top soil, and the best way to plant an apple-tree where the ground is at all inclined to be wet, as this ground is, is to turn the top sward upside down, place the tree on it, spread the roots out flat, and then tip some mould round each tree to cover the roots. What is that heap of dirt in the lane, sir?”

“Turf trimming and stable manure.”

“The very thing, sir. You tip a cart-load round each tree and keep the cattle from gnawing the trees, and I hope we shall live to have a deal for the fruit. I will send you the sorts, genuine and right;”—and after partaking of a glass of neat spirits, to take off what Mr. Benny described as the rawness of the morning,

he and his old pony trotted off to another orchard in search of more apples.

This man commenced life as a shepherd boy ;—and, if apples are capable of raising him to be a ready-money dealer, what could they not do for the landowner and the farmer, would they but turn their attention to their growth? The population increases, and the apples decrease ; in comes the foreigner with his scented barrels of substitute, and out goes the money, whilst the farmer's wife is in want of a ten-pound note to buy necessaries for the winter.

* * * *

The poor partridges little thought what a “bang! bang!” was in store for them when the Squire's coachman came to Farnborough Hall with the five dogs in readiness for the Squire's arrival. There were

Fag and Detective, two handsome pointers ; Bustle, a water-spaniel ; Pounce, a clumber-spaniel ; and Stopblock, a black retriever.

“What do you think of the dogs, sir?” asked the coachman, who was leading them.

“They look well,” I replied. “I should like to take Stopblock indoors.”

“Then, sir, if you take this gun,” said he, at the same time handing me the Squire’s breechloader, “he will follow you anywhere. He knows that gun as well as I do.”

I took the curly fellow indoors to be admired. Stopblock is a handsome fellow, with hair as curly as a nigger’s, and shiny as floss silk. He is never tied up, “for,” says the Squire, “how can you expect a dog to behave well when you tie him up for eight months of the year?” Stopblock is under the most perfect command.

All the other dogs are perfectly broken by the Squire himself to "drop" when a gun is discharged; but Stopblock has some liberty. He is called "Stop," but should the Squire call "Block," he drops directly. When a covey of partridges rises, he stands to note if any fall, and proceeds to retrieve them cautiously, unless he is otherwise directed. Some sportsmen may object to this, but they must remember that our guns are breech-loaded now; and, should Stopblock flush a bird, the sportsmen are ready for a second shot; besides, the dog is used for water-shooting.

The Squire and two friends, gentlemen from London, arrived at ten o'clock, and we proceeded to business.

"Now, Mr. Hope," said he, "we are the guests and you are master of the cere-

monies. Gentlemen," said he, addressing his friends, "the shooting and the game on this farm belong to Mr. Hope. It is only by his indulgence that we shoot here. I must ask you to shoot straight, not to shatter, and not to wound without killing."

"Nothing of the kind, gentlemen," I replied. "It is simply thus: I, for the first time in my life, have an interest in providing sport for my landlord: his shooting on my farm will cost him less, I'll be bound, than it ever has."

"You're right there, Hope," put in the Squire.

"And as to the game, gentlemen, we will share and share alike to-day; so kill all you can, or you won't have any to take home, but I must decline to be master of the ceremonies; and, Sir Hugh,

if you will be kind enough to give orders, I will fall into my place as gamekeeper."

"Very well, Mr. Hope, as you like. Then I vote that we start with one pointer; lead the other one, leave the spaniels here, and let Stopblock run loose. [Where is he?"]

"Indoors. I will run and fetch him and your gun."

"Never mind, never mind; I will go myself," and the Squire ran indoors for his dog and gun.

"Will you, gentlemen, walk in and take a glass of ale before we start?" I asked the Squire's friends.

"No, thanks," was the reply; and very shortly Stopblock and his master appeared, when the cartridges were placed in their little nest holes, whilst the partridges were shaking the dew from their brown backs.

“Now, gentlemen,” said Sir Hugh, just before we came to the first swede field, “I must ask you to observe my two rules, viz., muzzles down, and no talking. I can always stop my dogs with my hand. Stop and I will mark the dead birds, and, keeper, you mark the coveys.”

I took the right hand, Sir Hugh the left, and his two friends the middle. We flushed a splendid covey of nineteen in the first field, and the two gentlemen, Mr. Smith and Mr. Power (the Squire’s cousin), discharged four barrels at them. They dropt one bird, but could not decide to their satisfaction as to which of them killed it; whilst the Squire bagged a brace as they passed him to the left. Stopblock retrieved the Squire’s birds at one time, and then went in search of the third, which proved to be a runner, being winged only.

“There!” said the Squire, as he watched Stopblock following the running bird out of the field into some gorse in the lane; “that is to me the best part of the sport. I do like a good dog. See Fag, she has never moved since we shot. Here comes Stop with the bird alive in his mouth. I don’t think you need dispute any longer as to who killed the bird. A stray shot, eh, Mr. Hope? Hah! hah! hah!” and we resumed our march.

In the next field Fag suddenly pulled up, made a dead stand, and with her tail as straight as a poker, and her left forefoot suspended, she cautiously looked round for her master.

“Walk up, Smith! Walk up!” called the Squire. “A hare, I’ll be bound, by the way of the bitch.”

Mr. Smith, with one finger on the trigger

and the other hand lifting his gun in the air, stole up as if he were going to catch a small boy round the corner.

All the while Fag stood firm as a rock. She saw Mr. Smith tiptoeing towards her, but still she looked for her master, who, recognising her wish that he, too, should "walk up," called encouragingly: "Steady, Fag; steady, old girl!" She moved her tail in answer to her master, by which time Mr. Smith was close to her, and he peeped round and underneath the chest of the dog, as if she had the game in her keeping.

"Walk up! Walk up!" shouted the Squire. "On ahead. Can't you see the dog's nose where it points? Walk for that oak-tree."

Mr. Smith tiptoed along in that direction, and when he had proceeded about

ten yards, up jumped one of the finest old dog foxes you ever saw—such a brush and gray muzzle!

“War fox!” shouted the Squire; but before he had completed the caution, bang! bang! sounded from Mr. Smith’s gun, and with an extra flourish to his brush, bold Reynard wished him good-morning, and taking a look round to see what was the matter, the fox leisurely cantered off. Stopblock made a rush to make his acquaintance, but the Squire shouted “Block!” and his dog dropped immediately, whilst Fag dropped as well.

To say we did not enjoy the sport, if shooting twice at a fox is sport, would be untrue. I could not support myself for laughing, and lay down in the swedes whilst the tears ran from my eyes.

"I made sure it was a hare," modestly remarked Mr. Smith.

"No matter," put in the Squire. "Did you see the fox turn round and look at you? Don't you ever come this way by yourself, Smith, or that old fox will be paying you what he owes you. I am glad you didn't hit him, for I hope to ride a mile or two after his brush yet. That is the fox we named 'Gladstone' last year. I believe he has nine lives. We lost him in the churchyard once; we found him in the garden at the back of the Board School; he took us through a field of barley, and we had to pay the farmer for damages. I don't mind what hares and rabbits he kills on my estate so long as he lives to give us some sport. I believe that fox has a charmed life. We

haven't run him aground yet ; and as to you, Smith, he has given you a lesson to shoot straight, for it is no idle reports that will frighten ' Gladstone. '

We had some good shooting afterwards ; managed to kill the two old birds of a covey of sixteen ; the young ones, having lost their leaders, scattered, and one by one Fag pointed them in splendid style. We bagged ten of the young ones and the two old ones, and Mr. Power wiped Mr. Smith's eye twice in succession.

" Bravo ! Well shot ! " shouted my landlord, as the second bird towered ; " and well caught, Mr. Hope, " as I threw down my gun and caught the bird as it descended full forty feet like a cricket-ball, dead as a stone, shot through the head, by which time Fred Cripps came to hand with some refreshments.

"Hasn't that man been before me for poaching?" whispered Sir Hugh to me.

"Are you employing him?"

"Yes, sir. He has been at work for me for some months. I had an understanding with him. He is now my second keeper. I let him have a finger in the pie, and he is perfectly happy. He will have a brace of birds for his Sunday's dinner, and a hare or so later on, and he will think more of that than he would of gold. I was thinking of asking you to let him come and beat the woods this year, for he is that fond of the sport, and worth two ordinary beaters."

"Let him come, by all means. I wondered what had become of him. Good-morning, Cripps," as he touched his cap. "It is more pleasing for us to meet here than at the bench. I hope we shall be good friends yet. Mr. Hope tells me

you are coming to beat for us ; you come up to-morrow morning, and I will look out an old shooting-jacket."

"Thank you, sir," followed, and we sat beneath a spreading old oak to partake of the luncheon.

"Never saw so many birds on Farnborough Hall before," remarked the Squire. "How do you account for it?"

"It has been a good season, and, what is more, all my labourers knew that I wished them preserved. At one time we knew of ten nests, and nine of them ran ; the fox had the old bird off the tenth, and broke six of the eggs ; they were as cold as a stone when we took the other twelve eggs to put them under a hen, but they all hatched, and she reared ten of them in the garden. I know where to find them when the osiers are cut ; but just now there

are two eyes of pheasants with them that I don't want to disturb."

"By Jove!" exclaimed the Squire, "here are the foxhounds. I wonder whether Forster is with them. He loses half his income through this Irish question. We must make a subscription pack of it; can't afford to lose our foxhounds."

"It is only my shepherd and the foxhound puppy I am walking. I found him such a troublesome pup at home. He killed six young ducks and ran away with the men's boots; so, to keep him out of mischief, I handed him over to the shepherd, who has made a complete sheep-dog of him. That puppy will lead a flock of sheep, and they will all follow him anywhere."

"What a funny thing!" remarked Mr. Smith; "but doesn't he ever bark at them?"

"Oh yes; he has a splendid voice."

"He is a very handsome fellow!" exclaimed Mr. Power. "What is his name, shepherd?"

"We calls him Parnell, sir!"

The shepherd had brought us a partridge which had fallen in the field where he was at work. I asked him if he had rather have another one to cook with it, or a shilling?

"Well, thank you, sir, I'd rather have the shilling, for they be dry eating things without you've got the means to cook them," answered the shepherd, which ended in his receiving a trifle from all of us, and the shepherd and Parnell went in search of their sheep.

"I understand," said the Squire, "that Mr. Forster has named all his puppies this year after the Irish leaders; in fact,

we have Dillon and Davitt at the home-farm. They bark furiously at me, and poor old Brown is always calling out 'Lay down!' to them. However, their days are numbered, for the whipper-in will soon be round for them, and as Forster has lost half his income, I pity those pups when he takes them in hand."

"Do you think," I inquired, "that he would allow me to keep my puppy? The shepherd doesn't want to part with him, he is such a handsome dog, such a voice, and knows his business."

"What! Allow you to keep Parnell? Not he. I'll back Forster would rather give up the hunt than part with that dog. It will be the only satisfaction he will have this winter to put the whip into those beggars. All I am afraid of is that he will overdo it, for if you want to train

a pup you must be as firm as a rock, and pat him when he does right."

"Your name, Mr. Hope," remarked Mr. Smith, "reminds me of your curate's sermon last week. If I recollect right, "Hope" was his text, and he seemed quite carried away with his subject. Did you see the tears course each other down his cheek at the conclusion of his sermon? I think that fellow will make a preacher one day, if he is not too pathetic. I know a barrister in London, the biggest rake out, who attends church twice and sometimes thrice on the Sunday. At first I wouldn't believe my own eyes. I met him at the Alhambra or at the Aquarium night after night; and then to see him jogging along with a big prayer-book and an old lady on the Sunday was to me so ridiculous that I made bold to ask him what was

his little game. 'My dear fellow,' said he, 'Sunday is to me a day of business. First of all, I have to keep right with my aunt; I have expectations in that direction, and she keeps an excellent cook. She is fond of trotting about to hear all the popular preachers, and whilst she is listening to the sermon I am able to study effect.' Some of these pathetic fellows are very clever; they block up all the gangways, hedge you in, and then down on your feelings. I recollect addressing a jury once in a very difficult case. I took my keynote from one of our eloquent preachers, and I won in a canter. But what was your curate driving at?"

"Farewell sermon; he is off to America," said Sir Hugh, as he rose and suggested we should renew our attack on the partridges. "What," he inquired,

is that tall patch of something growing in and around that old pit, Mr. Hope? I have looked at it repeatedly from the road, but could never make it out exactly. We always found some birds in that old pit."

"We must not try there to-day, Sir Hugh; the pit is full of pheasants. I planted some artichokes and French beans to hold them until October; the beans climb the artichokes, which saves beansticks, and we shall leave a few French beans to hang for the pheasants in the winter. There is no cover for pheasants round here, but we know of three eyes of pheasants in there, and they roost in these trees at night."

"Good! good! Mr. Hope. That will be a very pretty bit of shooting for October. Now, keeper, catch up Fag

and let the Detective loose. I say, Smith, you seem rather stiff; not used to fox-shooting, eh? Have another glass of Burton; pull yourself together, and Teck will ease you all he can. Won't you, old man? Good old boy!" and the Squire patted his immense speckled and spotted pointer, with jole, lips, and feet like a bloodhound. "Teck," he continued, "is my afternoon's dog. If you feel tired we can dispense with the regular beating and this dog will find sport for us. We have only to sit on the gates and send him into the fields. We can't shoot over Mr. Aldridge's farm to-day because he has not cleared his corn; but we can go over Mr. Bull's farm when we have beaten this field of mangel. I vote we beat this field in the regular way, just to tame Teck a bit, and to take the stiffness out of you, gentlemen."

We found a covey in the mangel-wurzel, and having bagged a brace we adjourned to Mr. Bull's late farm to complete the day's sport. Teck was a most valuable assistant, for he beat most of the fields by himself, going always to the leeward; and, working up the field with his nose in the air, he pointed as old-fashioned dogs pointed when shooting was real sport, and before battue-shooting came into fashion. Once the birds were running towards the dog; he backed and backed until they came too near, when he dropped, and we found the birds to the leeward of him. It is no wonder the Squire is proud of his dogs, and their proper housing and comfort was his first study before he sat down to the dinner my people had prepared for us at five o'clock on our return to Farnborough Hall.

It was a very fair day's sport—eighteen brace of partridges, nine hares, a brace of quails, and five rabbits. I sent eight brace of partridges, the quails, and four hares home with the Squire's dogs; he would not take more, and for the first time my larder was ornamented with home-bred game.

Formerly I rented some shooting, and in those days I should have given all this game away—a brace of partridges, for instance, to the chief bank clerk, and people in like positions who worked hand in hand with tenant-farmers.

Farmers' banking accounts are now very different to what they were; there is no mutual understanding, and no overdrawing your account. Indeed, the country bankers show you no favour unless you can leave at least 200*l.* in their till. They have

become borrowers instead of lenders; they have lost all their faith, and a good deal of their money. It is very questionable as to whether a banking account is of any service to a farmer. A cheque-book is now more a subject of suspicion than a passport of substantiality. Bankers won't have your account on reasonable terms, unless you lend them money, and you have to subscribe heavily towards the support of themselves and clerks if you only keep a hand-to-mouth account. I do very little with them, as I prefer the old long-stocking system, viz. buy an article and pay for it in Bank of England notes or gold. If we balanced personal robberies against percentages charged by bankers for working our accounts, bankers bleed us profusely. The only class of farmer they want is a cattle-dealing man, who will take their paper to fairs at a

distance and distribute it for their benefit. To these men they sometimes show a little favour, but with them "self" stands first, and it is my opinion, that, until the new Land Bill removes the law of distress, and unexhausted improvements become the property of the tenant, a county banking account is of no consequence to the tenant-farmer. When these obstacles are removed it is possible that the bankers will again see their way clear to trade with the farmers of England. A survey of their stock and growing crops may enable the country banker safely to invest at a reasonable rate. The moment he can do this it will be a great boon to the farmer, who will no longer be liable to be trapped by money-lending scoundrels, whose only aim is to sell up and reap a double profit by the auction.

We *did* enjoy our dinner, and indeed

there is no meal so thoroughly appreciated as the one following a good day's shooting. (I think the rump-steak pudding suffered most.) And, having previously changed clothes and made themselves comfortable, my visitors settled down to spend the evening.

"I noticed as we came in," said my landlord, "that you were planting fruit-trees. It is very odd, but the last letter I wrote was to a friend of mine who asked my opinion as to the way in which he should invest some money for an orphan boy for whom he is trustee, and I recommended that he should buy a piece of land as near London as possible and plant it with fruit-trees. It would let now at once to pay all the boy's expenses, and, by the time he was of age, not only would the land have increased in value,

but the trees would provide him with a good income. I was looking over our imports, which amount annually to something enormous—see, here are the figures :

Raw fruit	£1,704,000
Nuts	467,000
Vegetables	2,685,000
Eggs	2,500,000
Poultry	300,000
.	
Total	£7,656,000

These figures speak for themselves, and plainly illustrate in which direction we should turn our attention. What are the names of the apples you are planting ?”

I repeated the sorts, and Sir Hugh made a note of them, by which time the cloth was removed, and Mr. Smith opened the piano and favoured us with “An Awful Little Scrub.” He was a far better pianist than sportsman, and fully made

up the latter deficiency by adding to our evening's amusement. Every man has a forte and a fault, and I never met a man without a redeeming quality of some kind. Even the murderer Peace was fond of his dumb animals. Mr. Smith, it appears, is a stock-broker; but even he complains of the want of confidence in the country. Whilst the tea was being prepared, we enjoyed a quiet smoke in the office, where we found Stopblock before the fire, guarding his master's gun, and arranging his curls after his hard day's work.

My wife and daughters joined us at tea, and the evening was spent most agreeably with a little music and singing. Sir Hugh's cousin has a splendid voice, and complimented my daughters, Laura especially, as regards her proficiency as a pianiste. Their D.V. "Venetian Boat Song," by Jacques

Blumenthal ; and J.D. "Brise des Nuits," by George Lamothe, were thoroughly appreciated ; and when Laura sang "The Arrow and the Song," by Pinsuti, Mr. Power favoured us with the song, "My Queen," which he rendered in the most accomplished manner; difficult as it is. The boys came in when the men and cattle had gone to rest, and poor David was joked as to his forthcoming marriage.

"Where do you intend to spend your honeymoon?" asked his landlord.

"In Normandy," he replied.

"Normandy, indeed ! but can you speak French ?"

"Oh yes," answered my wife ; "our children all speak French. We were obliged to send them to boarding-schools, and I selected schools where they spoke French. Children soon learn the language if they

are not allowed to speak English, and one of the masters was the son of a Normandy farmer. He came and stayed one holiday-time with us at our late farm. The boys have always corresponded with him. Mr. Hope has sent him cattle, and now he is farming himself he has invited David to go and compare their farming with our own."

"Wonderful people those French farmers," I said. "They are the mainstay of their country; paid off the Prussian demand after the Franco-Prussian war, and they accomplish as much on one hundred acres of land as we do on five hundred in England."

"Yes," said Mr. Power; "and I think that the small holdings are the secret of their success. In this country men have too much land and can't attend to it properly."

"I think," put in Mr. Smith, "that it is more a question of the farmer's habits in this country than of the holdings. What do you think?" addressing Sir Hugh.

"Impossible to say. Farmers with large holdings and steam appliances, farmers with small holdings and industrious habits, Scotch farmers, Welsh farmers, Irish farmers, and all farmers, have gone more or less to the bad. It has been too much a matter of paying for the right to crop the land and having no crop to gather. In Ireland the tenants have refused to pay rent, or to quit the land. In England the tenants have been sold up, or have quitted their farms. Here we have a difficulty to find new tenants; there the difficulty is to get rid of the old ones. However, with Mr. Walter, of *The Times*, travelling in

America, and your son going to Normandy, let us hope we shall arrive at a remedy. Give me your pocket-book, Mr. David, and I will give you the addresses of some people I know in France. Call and see them if you can. It is the very best school of farming to which you could pay a visit, I assure you. My friends here," said the Squire, "are anxious to see a little badger-hunting. The only time my people hunt them appears to be at night. My game-keeper tells me there is a badger's draw in the upper wood. We have fixed on to-morrow night, if fine. I am unable to be of the party, but," said he, addressing George and David, "if you young gentlemen would join my friends, I am sure they would be glad of your company; and can you bring that large rough dog, and, if

possible, one that will give tongue? It makes the thing more exciting to have a dog with a deep voice."

The boys readily assented, and promised to take Keneally and the foxhound puppy. The Squire also invited me to shoot with the party over another farm on the morrow, and as he left he gave me a slip of paper on which was written, "Come early; I have something I wish to say to you before we start."

It was about nine o'clock when I presented myself at the Squire's residence. I was immediately shown into his study. He shook me warmly by the hand, and bade me be seated.

"Mr. Hope," said he, "I am about to ask a great favour of you. I wonder whether you will grant it?"

"Certainly, Sir Hugh," I immediately replied. "Anything in my power you have only to ask and have."

"Then, Mr. Hope, I ask your permission to pay my addresses to your daughter Laura."

"Sir Hugh," I said, "what could lead you to think of this?"

"Lead me? Why, her singular beauty, her modesty, her mental superiority, and her habits of industry."

"And have you said anything to Laura about it?"

"No."

"I am glad of that."

"And why?"

"Because it can never be. I would never sanction her marrying into a circle where she would not be received as an equal. I respect you, Sir Hugh, as a land-

lord and as a friend; but it shall never be said that Mark Hope compromised the position of his best friend."

"My dear sir," remonstrated Sir Hugh, "you cannot know the world so well as I do. To begin with, I hate the rules of society and the observances to which they tie us. From time to time I have considered the effect of alliances that you say would come more strictly within the circle of my acquaintance. I might, perhaps, marry a lady of means, who would expect an establishment in accordance with her present position, which would be a positive tax upon me and my liberty. Again, I might marry into a good family, as it is called, which would be a double tax. In either case I should be no longer free to attend to my duty as landlord. My wife would have no interest in the business,

would be no help to me, and I should be obliged to live away from you and to employ an agent, or to sacrifice the happiness of my wife. I am quite sure, Mr. Hope, that we must all come back to our original positions, and bring back what educational advantages we have acquired and throw them in the scale. The tradesman must give up his villa residence and live at his shop again, or the co-operative companies will annihilate him; and the landed proprietors must come home, whether it be to Ireland or to England, and promote the interest of their tenants. I have for some time been looking for a partner to assist me in that important duty, and whose own life will be a pattern to her dependents. I see in your daughter the lady I would win, and surely if the Queen of England has thought fit to marry

her daughter to a commoner, what objection can you have to such an alliance? It can only be a personal one, I presume."

"Sir Hugh," I said, "you misunderstand me. If you were not my landlord it would be different, and, so far as personality is concerned, I unhesitatingly say that had you no position and no property, I should be proud to own you as my son-in-law, but as things are it cannot be."

Just then the servant came to say that the gentlemen had come down to breakfast, and the Squire rose, saying: "Think it over, Mr. Hope. Come and have a cup of coffee."

Sir Hugh's cousin was the best marksman that day, and Mr. Smith actually killed a bird after the Squire had shot at it. He complimented him on the achieve-

ment, but his laugh was forced, and his cousin said: "I say, Hugh, what is the matter with you to-day? You don't seem to be in good form."

So passed the day, and I was glad when it was over. There are days in one's life, dark, miserable days, London fog days, days of thought, anxiety, and uncertainty—days when a man looks at his watch repeatedly during the afternoon, and at last, with a sigh of relief, he calls out: "Put the shutters up, boy; I've had enough of this day." Such a day was this one to me. I asked myself continually: "Have I done anything to bring about this position?" The answer came always: "No;" I did not expect it; I had not sought it; I still did not do so. It was a relief to get home that I might relate what had occurred to my wife, and

perhaps it was a greater relief to me still to find that someone else was in trouble.

I was met by my daughter Fanny, who asked me had I had a pleasant day, and jokingly said: "Why, Pa, you are getting quite a great man instead of the working farmer you pictured to us. Fancy shooting with the Squire! The other tenants will be quite jealous." Then she went on to open her heart and to say: "Pa, the Aldridges have come home, and Lionel and his father have had a quarrel. Mr. Aldridge expected that the corn would be fit to thrash. He is disappointed, and so angry with poor Lionel, who is here. They have parted in anger, and he is here. Be kind to him, father dear; wont you? You know he couldn't help the weather." Next her arms were entwined round my

neck, and that loving kiss imprinted, the kiss of one's own child ; and where is the man that has power to resist such an appeal unless he sees that it is the inevitable step into danger ?

“ Be kind to him, Fanny ? Of course I will. You know I always have been. It is not his fault that he is what he is. He certainly has improved greatly of late ; but I fear, my dear, that he will be some time before he will be able to get you a living.”

“ Never mind that, father dear,” followed, and she led me into our comfortable family room, where he was taking tea with them all. That is the room for comfort. Say what you like about drawing-rooms and lounges and couches, but give me a room where one is not afraid of scratching the furniture, and there is

a good wood fire on the dog-irons, for rest and comfort.

“Well, Farmer Lionel, and how are you to-night?” I said, as I extended my hand to him. “Don’t trouble to tell me what is the matter,” I continued, seeing that he looked unhappy. “Fanny has forestalled you. It is no more than I expected; but never mind. Meet your troubles like a man; you will find plenty of them in this world. Don’t quarrel with your father, if only for the sake of after reflection. Stick to it, and you will get along some day.”

“I wish,” said Lionel, “that I had taken your advice about that wheat. I hope you won’t tell the governor that you told me to wait. It would make him ten times worse.”

“Certainly not, my lad. I make it a

rule that if I can't do any good, I never do any harm by chattering about what might have been the case. Your father should have remained at home, for it was very very trying for you. I certainly told you that had the wheat been mine I should not have carried it; but then, a man can do as he likes with his own, and the weather really has been so peculiar that we could not answer for it a day. You must keep your spirits up, and if your father is very very cross, why, come and have a walk with me. David will be going away directly; and, if George goes to look after his farm, there will be the steam-plough to follow up and no end of work to look to. It is best to begin one's trouble early in life. It gives you a steel facing to edge your way on with. If one is never case-hardened every blow tells

with double force. The boys are off badger-hunting, I suppose ; so stay and spend an hour with us. I have some business to transact with your father in the morning, so you will have the farm to yourself until dinner-time. Fathers are always better after dinner, aren't they, Fanny ? ”

“ I don't think they are quite so cross, Pa ; but I think the weather has most to do with farmers' spirits. If it is what they require, they are busy, and no trouble to us. I mean to study fancy basket-making, and employ some women, and if you are disagreeable, Pa, I shall take myself off to the baskets, and make one to put you in, legs, arms, and all, until you are good.”

“ Not much of a season for steam-cultivating this autumn,” remarked Mr. Lionel.

"I have noticed that you have not employed it as yet."

"No ; but we can see to an inch where we ploughed with horses between the shocks in that dry weather. It killed every weed, and it has been a splendid season for planting trifolium, rye, tares, cabbage, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts. I don't know where I could employ a steam-plough if I wanted to, as, if you notice, I haven't a field of waste land. It is all planted with something. Spring cabbage do well after stubble, and we can't do anything with the land until spring ; these cabbages will be off in time to clean it and to get a crop of turnips, if not swedes. The steam-plough is a great friend in time of need and good weather ; but the man who can afford to do without it in our country is the only

man to whom it is of real service. To depend upon the steam-plough is to depend upon the certainty of fine weather, which we cannot do. To employ it occasionally with an ample strength of horse-power to follow it is to accomplish in three days the work of a month, and to secure a seed-time that would often be lost without it. In a favourable season a man may save a summer fallow, and get the land cleaned at a less expense than by his horse-labour, with a crop in the bargain; and in answer to the old-fashioned notion of resting the land, I would say, put some condition into the land and take the stagnation out of it. Market-gardener's land producing three crops annually is in good condition; but the summer-fallow man is afraid to sow his land because he knows it is not capable of growing anything. At

the same time, there are certain stiff clay soils which cannot be worked in the spring, and for which a summer fallow and a good coat of manure are the best old-fashioned remedy. If this land is done properly, it will grow wheat and beans of which a farmer may be proud. No rule without an exception, especially in farming matters ; but the land lying idle annually in England, simply for the want of strength to clean it, and of strength in it when it is cleaned, is very considerable."

A farming discussion and a game at cribbage passed away the evening, and poor Lionel left us in better spirits.

One of the things sadly wanted just now is a sheep-distribution company to provide farmers with sheep, and to give them a chance of reaping a profit on the improvement of the sheep, and of feeding

off the beautiful growth of roots which would restore the land so fed off (with corn or cake, of course) to its corn-bearing status. Sheep would do more good than royal agricultural inquiries.

I see that the railway inquiry has resulted in a recommendation that the public should be able to buy a railway clearing-house classification, that a month's notice is to be given in case of a rate being increased, and that Mr. Grierson, of the Great Western Railway, has intimated that an additional charge will be made for loading and unloading at the stations if the rates are upset. All this is no doubt highly satisfactory to some minds; but before you thank the commission for having driven the railway clearing-house classification into the market, I would suggest that you ask those gentle-

men if anyone of them can understand the book, and, if so, will they turn up the rates for glass and tell you at what rate would their spectacles be conveyed by goods-train in case we want, and we certainly shall want, to borrow them ?

The book in question is the result of the labour of three thousand clerks employed at the railway clearing-house, and it beats Bradshaw. When you have obtained it you only have the classes at which the goods may be sent, and you will have to go to the station for the rates. You might as well go there for both at the same time.

What farmers want is a universal mileage rate for every article of produce, and to make the railways carry small and large quantities at that rate. It would be a matter of ease for them to do it. It is

being done under their nose daily. For instance, the parcels delivery companies ; they collect parcels from all parts, pack them into large ones, send them down in bulk at a low goods rate, unpack them, distribute them as a post-office mail-bag is unsealed and the letters distributed. In the case of the parcels the receivers have to smart, each one being separately charged ; and, as the railway company does the work for it which she refuses to do for the public, the parcels delivery company pockets a handsome dividend and laughs at both. In fact, it lives by its wits, and the railway company loses for the want of wit.

Distance is not a question with the post-office people. A letter to your next-door neighbour is one penny, and so is one to Ireland. With this exception, I see no reason on earth why general rates for

carriage of traffic should not be framed and imposed on these railway people. Supposing the post-office authorities to-morrow morning attempted to adopt railway companies' officialism in the transaction of their business, do you think they would ever get through their business? The post-office management of this country is one of her greatest ornaments. If rates, as I suggest, were drawn out by practical men, based, if you like, on the existing rates, only equalising them and abolishing cruel fraudulent local rates, the effect on railway management would be marvellous. The shareholders would save paper and scribblers sufficient to pay a dividend of ten per cent. at once, and thousands of drone officers who now do nothing but make rates and rate small boys would be relieved of their occupation.

“ Why can't shareholders see this, and come forward and assist the Government in its attempt to legislate not against, but for, them and the public, instead of sending an arrogant representative to threaten the public with an increase by charging for loading and unloading? Would that I had the time and opportunity to go down a railway, to bring the sinecure gentlemen on to the platform of inquiry. .

There is nothing so satisfactory as knowing what you have to pay. Once railway rates were simplified in this manner, any boy could calculate the cost; and as to the railway company putting forward the argument that they could not convey small parcels of this and that to any given point without a loss, it is simply nonsense. They might as well apply that argument to their daily passengers, and say they could not

start a train in any particular direction, unless they have a guarantee of a certain number of passengers. It is their business to pack and arrange goods and parcels in transitional order for the benefit of their customers, and should not be left to the parcels companies so to arrange them for their own benefit. Shareholders' money would then by compulsion be invested in the employment of efficient packers, instead of rough porters and red tape. Traffic and mileage returns would then form the true basis of railway calculations, and the farmer, whose proximity to our home markets should secure him advantages for which he pays dearly, would no longer be cut out of the market by the foreigner, for whose freight general managers interested in percentage on increase of traffic have catered until they only reap the benefit of

a nominal rate, which enables the foreigner to carry off our money and laugh at our submission. In France, by a joint arrangement between the railway and postal authorities, the parcels services are most wisely and economically arranged at the following rates: Three kilogrammes, or a little over 6½ lb.—in Paris, 25c., a fraction under 2½d.; from any station to any station in France, 85c., about 8d.; from any station in France to any station in Belgium, Germany, or Switzerland, 1f. 45c., about 1s. 2d. These rates all include delivery. Compare this with our ridiculous railway charge for carrying parcels, and the thing speaks for itself.

I talked the subject of the Squire's proposal for our daughter over with my wife, who, although she thought it was an opportunity that might never occur again, agreed

with me that in our present position it would be unwise to encourage it, but she undertook to break the matter to Laura, and charge her to keep her own counsel. It was only right she should be made acquainted with the matter. To be forewarned is to be forearmed, and I know of an instance where two young noblemen were once invited to visit the mother of an heiress. One was made acquainted with the fact that the heiress had the opportunity of selecting either for her husband; the other was not aware of the fact. He was the finer fellow of the two, and his family will never cease to regret that, owing, perhaps, to his ignorance of the mission, he lost the golden opportunity, for which many a warrior has crossed swords with a rival knight in olden times.

“ Well, boys,” I inquired, “ how did you get on badger-hunting last night ? ”

George related the night’s sport as follows:

“ We took Keneally and Parnell, and called for Mr. Power and Mr. Smith. The keeper said it was best to wait until the moon was up, so we partook of some refreshments, and, having provided ourselves with cigars and flasks, we went to the upper wood as the clock struck ten. The keeper had his wire-haired terrier, Daniel, with him, and a man with pickaxe and spade. All was still as death in the wood, and the light of the moon threw many odd reflections across our path, enough, as Mr. Smith said, to fill a column of ghost tales in *The Daily Telegraph*. We followed the keeper through a winding path to the badger’s draw, and how he could have

drawn all the earth out is a mystery to me—cartloads of it. The keeper sent Daniel, as he called him, into the hole, and, having listened for some time, he reported: 'Badger not at home. Daniel has come back.' 'What is to be done now?' inquired Mr. Power. 'Oh, it's all right,' said the keeper; 'Daniel will find him if you will have patience and keep silence.' The keeper placed a sack in the hole, with the mouth outwards and tied with string to close up when the badger entered; and then he tried the dog into the hole again, patted Keneally and Parnell, and bade us climb the trees adjacent and smoke in silence whilst he went in search of the badger. We had such fun getting Mr. Smith up a tree, you can't think; but at last we were all perched, and the keeper and three dogs

went in search of the badger, again bidding us keep silence and secure the badger the moment he was bagged. An occasional suppressed laugh, and the announcement from Mr. Smith that he had torn his trousers, was the only violation of the rule, when we suddenly heard Parnell give tongue in the distance. They were a long way off at first, quite in the valley, whither, I suppose, the badger had gone in search of his supper, but gradually they wound round the hill, and, as Parnell's voice echoed in the deep stillness of the night, I could picture a poor nigger escaping from a bloodhound as I heard it, and the effect was grim, I can tell you. 'Parnell is getting closer to Home Rule,' whispered Mr. Smith, as he gave full tongue at the foot of the hill; and then Keneally made a rush and a bark which meant business, I knew, and

we were on the tiptoe of expectation as badger and dogs came rushing up towards us. It was a terrific race, I could tell by the branches and leaves. There was a clear space below us, and, as the light of the moon revealed the badger coming up, I felt sure Keneally would have him before he got home; and so he did, but he as quickly let go, and into the sack went badger. David was down first and caught hold of the sack, but he had gone right through it into the hole, and Daniel bundled in after him. The keeper soon came up. He was dreadfully cross at the badger getting through the sack, and sounded for Daniel's barking. You could only just hear a very faint bark, the hole was so deep; and having ascertained in which direction the hole wound, we opened the earth where the keeper directed, and all dug

and pecked by turns. Keneally kept watch at the hole, and as we got lower and lower Daniel's barking became audible, and the keeper declared that we were just 'overright' the badger, so we renewed our efforts and expected that every dig would reveal the subterranean combatants. 'Why don't you stop the mouth of the hole up?' inquired Mr. Power. 'Why,' said the keeper, 'Daniel blocks him that way, he can't get back.' Let me come down the hole now.' The keeper got down into the hole, scraped out the soil with his hands, and announced that he should have the badger directly, for he was close to him. The steam from the breath of the badger and Daniel was already ascending through a small aperture where the keeper had broken through upon them, and he made a grab to secure the badger.

He must have missed him, for the next moment the badger rushed out at Keneally's entrance, and he seized and held him. 'Take a hold of the badger!' lustily called the keeper to Mr. Smith, who was nearest."

"And did Mr. Smith collar him?" I asked.

"Yes, he did; but he soon let go again, for the badger let go of Keneally and bit Mr. Smith through the hand. You should have heard the exclamations of Mr. Smith and the wrath of the keeper as the badger got away! The dogs couldn't catch him again, and he lives for another night's sport."

CHAPTER III.

THE Squire's friends, Mr. Smith and Mr. Power, did not return to London without coming to see us, and we all had a pressing invitation to run up to town and spend a few days, of which it is more than likely we shall avail ourselves. Both gentlemen promised to come and have another shot at a partridge, should they be spared to see another September. I hope to have the pleasure of entertaining them, for though the disparity between the city man and the farmer, which existed in days gone by, has, thanks to railway communication,

ceased to exist; and although I am of opinion that a provincial townsman is now a more enlightened man than a man who has spent all his days in London, and is in happy ignorance as to Dame Nature, her laws, and her children, still there is always much information to be imbibed from our city friends, who doubtless enjoy a quiet week in the country.

Sir Hugh did not come with them, but he called soon afterwards, and pressed me to withdraw my objection to his paying his addresses to my daughter.

"Mr. Hope," said he, "if you saw the case in its right light you would relent. Your objection would be reasonable under some circumstances. I think if I explain those circumstances you will withdraw that objection. You must know that I had a brother; we parted in anger. We have not

heard of him since he left England. Now, for aught we know, he may be living. At any moment he may return. In my dreams I often see him. I have even held myself in readiness to resign the estate to him should he return. I should welcome his return with all my heart, although that event would reduce my income to a simple 200*l.* per annum. Under these circumstances, Mr. Hope, it would be folly for me to marry any lady who would be attracted to the contract by the position apparently at command. My brother's return, should he be living—and we have heard of far stranger cases—would involve me in pecuniary difficulties that I have no wish to encounter. I always determined that, should I marry, I would marry someone who would be able to assist me, and take an interest in the work I have before me,

and to whom I should explain the prospect before us, with a view to hoping for the best, thinking for the worst, and bearing what happened. I have long since selected in your daughter the lady I would win. Her accomplishments and claims to the position contrast most favourably with those of many ladies I could mention. I must press you to yield to my reasonable appeal to your feelings."

I confess I was much moved by what Sir Hugh had said. It was all true, and too touching to admit of contradiction. Had it not been that my wife had agreed with me that my previous conviction was right, I perhaps should have wavered; but we had both seen too much of life to sanction what the world would term a *mésalliance*. I dared not trust myself to say much, and to conclude allusion to such

a painful subject I rose, gave the Squire my hand, and said :

“Sir Hugh, if ever your brother returns and you have to face the world on an equality with my position, you have my sanction to win the affection of my daughter ; but to my landlord, and the owner of this estate, I will never grant it.”

“May I then inquire after the health of the young lady ?” said Sir Hugh.

“She is quite well,” I replied—“at least she was well when she left us on a visit to her aunt this morning only, who is coming back with her to attend my son’s wedding.”

Sir Hugh remained and had a long chat with my wife and Fanny, who little thought what had transpired in private.

The first day of pheasant shooting was the occasion of our next interview. I shot with my landlord, had a glorious day's sport, and no allusion to the subject before mentioned was made on either side. We beat up full 200 pheasants, and killed 110 of them. Sir Hugh invited a brother magistrate and two other friends to shoot with him. He passed the compliment of inviting me to dine, but as the dinner was to be a set affair, and ladies were of the evening party, I declined making myself uncomfortable by attempting to maintain a conversation and a position altogether beyond my reach. The beating, too, had very much fatigued me, as I was anxious to maintain my position as head-keeper, and to show all the sport I could.

Michaelmas hiring-fair was the next

event out of the ordinary course of farming. It was wonderful to see the number of lads and men who presented themselves in readiness to be hired. A policeman, who was keeping the market square in order, was addressing some of the men on the impropriety of farm service, and its near approach to slavery. I thought it would be as well for him to put his own clothes on, before he spoke of the "liberty of English subjects." I will warrant he had no better clothes to wear than the men who presented themselves as (according to his definition) serfs to the farmer. There was only one man, amongst fully 1000 who were waiting to be engaged, wearing a smock frock, and the appearance of the men generally was far in advance of the appearance of a body of farmers, say, twenty years since. This, then, is one of the results of the progress

of civilisation. We all know that a black coat and tweed trousers are expensive articles to purchase and maintain, and not so serviceable to the farm-labourer as cord trousers and a smock frock, and I very much fear that most of the pockets of these men were empty. At any rate, there was a strong evident desire on the part of the men to be hired at very low wages, and very little desire on the part of farmers to engage any but the lads, who were readily caught up at from 4s. 6d. to 7s. per week, and 30s. to 3l. at Michaelmas. Wages fell; 14s. per week was the top price for carters and shepherds; and travelling in the train I was told that in Gloucestershire many day labourers are in receipt of 9s. per week only. There was a marked absence of all Labourers' Union spokesmen, and very

many men returned to their homes without obtaining an engagement for the coming year.

I think I may safely say that a black coat and a flippant tongue are the only signs of progress that the English farmer's labourer has to show so far.

I was struck with a remark made by an old friend of mine, Mr. Loudon. I asked him if he had engaged his men for the coming year, when he informed me that he very rarely hired a new man.

"Depend upon it," said he, "this annual chopping and changing is productive of great loss to the farmer and to the labourer. I wouldn't be compelled, on any consideration, to keep a man for twelve months who did not suit me. I have managed to get men who do suit me; I try to make them comfortable, and they stay with me from

year to year. You can't expect," said he, "to get perfect men ; every man has some failings, but if they are not bad, it is best to put up with one whose failings you do know, than to have a parcel of new hands about you ; as you do not know what it may cost you in the shape of loss of cattle and in other ways, before you find out the short-comings of new men."

I practically enforced his argument, for I engaged two of my old men, who had lived with me six and seven years at my previous farm.

But now for the chief hiring of this Michaelmas, which was a matter of far greater concern to myself and family. I refer to the marriage of my son David to Mary Bull, which took place in the parish church one bright October morning. At the especial request of Mary's father, it

was a very quiet, homely wedding. No carriages, no expensive dresses, and no show. "Better," said Mr. Bull, "to give the young people a few bank notes in a canvas bag than to have a grand affair now, and want for a 5*l.* note later."

So far Mr. Bull's wishes were studied. The young people walked to church, but the church was decorated ; very many families were represented, flowers were strewn in the path of the young couple, and presents from all parts found their way to the bride. They were not the usual presents that one reads of in an account of a wedding in high life, which too often are the insincere offerings to be returned in some other shape on some forthcoming similar occasion. They were not the gifts of people who look for the publication of the magnificence of their

donation as an advertisement of the desirability of courting their princely society ; but they were kind genuine tributes of a general regard for the filial affection of a good loving child, who had won the hearts of her neighbours by her gentle exemplary daily life. If they were not costly, they were priceless, each one in its particular form, from the quilt worked by the school-children, to the sewing-machine presented by a lady. Our Farmers' Association sent a new churn, a refrigerator, and a complete set of dairy utensils. Even the vicar coupled a set of farm books with his new edition of the Testament. Sir Hugh's present was a pretty market cart of polished oak. Her poor old father cried and sobbed sadly at the altar. He was thinking of her mother, he told us ; and when the bride and

bridegroom left, bound the next day for France, he broke down completely, whereupon Aunt Mary Ann took charge of him, and arranged there and then to keep house and to get things in order for the return of Mr. and Mrs. David Hope.

Mrs. House, our old nurse, was, of course, present on the occasion. David was, as she called him, one of her boys, and the celebration of such an event could not be carried out properly without her presence. She did all the packing, too, for Mary, and was very useful on both sides.

“You have had a large family of your own, Mrs. House,” I remarked, as we were talking over the wedding on the following evening.

“Yes, sir; I bred up eleven.”

“Are they all doing well?” I inquired.

“Some are, and some not. My ’usband and I didn’t hit it exactly, and the children are not as brothers and sisters should be. He was a proud man; wouldn’t associate with no one as ’adn’t a lot of money. My relations wasn’t moneyed people, and he gave them the cold shoulder, and was the means of my falling out with them. When he died, his brother wouldn’t act as ’secutor, and him as did act was a man of figures. It all went on pretty well till the children wanted getting out, and then it all went. I had to take to the nursing. I might have gone to my relations, but you see, sir, ’twas pride, first on his part, and then on mine, and as I hadn’t troubled after my friends when I had plenty, they didn’t trouble after me. I couldn’t do what I should have liked for the children. You

see, sir, it wants friends to get children out. My 'usband never made friends, only in business, and a woman can't do for a family like a man, not when they grow up. I've often wished I could see my time over again. I should try and make friends instead of enemies, for, if you stick yourself up, everybody seems pleased when you come down. There's no such sin as pride, Mr. Hope; but there, I have good health, and mustn't grumble."

"I agree with you, though," answered my wife. "I am sure that pride makes more bankrupts than misfortune. It is the sin of the age. Family disunion and false notions of gentility are expensive lodgers."

"Yes, ma'am; they generally falls out, and breaks summut, 'fore they've done

with it. I don't know," she continued, "where you would find a 'umbler man than our Squire. If I live till to-morrow I 'tends to pay him a visit, bless his 'art ; that I do !"

Poor woman ! How strange that she should be with us and make such a remark. It seems so to me now, when I know what followed.

My son David and his wife were crossing the Channel, and I was in my first sleep, when Keneally aroused me.

"Call this confounded dog off ! Open the door ! Jinks, where are you ?" followed by a loud knocking at the front door, were the sounds which first greeted my ear.

"Who's there ?" I shouted from the window. "Keneally, lie down !"

"Come and open the door," was the only response.

"Who can it be at this time of night?" inquired my wife, as I shuffled on some clothing, lit the lamp, and prepared to descend.

"I don't know," I said, "but I will go and see."

I opened the front door, and someone, dressed as a sailor, blundered in and sat in the nearest chair.

"Who the devil are you?" was my visitor's first question.

"May I return the inquiry?" I replied.

"Where's Jinks?" he incoherently inquired.

"Captain Jinks?"

"Yes, Captain Jinks—Colonel Jinks, if you like. I don't care what you call him."

"Captain Jinks has left here nearly two years since," I answered.

"Oh! And who are you?"

"The present tenant."

"Then I'm your landlord. Have you got any brandy?"

"Rather late, sir; don't you think a cup of coffee would be better? I have some hot water."

"Coffee be d——d!" shouted my visitor. "Brandy! brandy! brandy!"

Fearing he would arouse all the inmates, seeing that he *had* been a gentleman, and wishing to detain my strange guest until Mrs. House should see him, I complied.

"Good health, old cock! Don't care who you are! I'm your landlord—that's all I know!" were the exclamations of my guest as he swallowed a tumbler of half brandy and half water, and then, with eyes only half open, his head too heavy for his neck to carry it upright, and legs going in different directions, he inquired :

"Can you find me a bed, old cock? Haven't got a d——d shilling. Just pay that cabby outside."

I returned to my bedroom, found my wife dressed, told her to call Mrs. House, paid and dismissed the patient cabman, and returned to find my unexpected guest fast asleep, with his trousers pockets turned inside out.

Mrs. House soon came down. She made all sorts of faces and dumb motions. Surveyed the sleeping beauty from all points, put her finger to her lips and studied, and finally turning up the coat sleeve of his left arm, unbuttoned his shirt sleeve to search for some particular mark, and whispered aloud:

"It's him!"

"Who?" inquired my wife.

"Why, the Squire's brother, the owner of this estate."

"We must get him to bed. Call George. Where can he sleep?" I said.

"He can have my bed," replied Mrs. House, "I will sit up with him. I dare-say the poor fellow has been over-rejoicing."

George helped me to carry him up, and again Mrs. House took charge of her baby. She had first taught him the use of the bottle, but now appearances indicated that he had taken to something stronger than milk, and required a nurse still, for he was helpless as an infant.

"Here is a pretty set out," I remarked, when we had closed the door on Mrs. House and her baby boy. "I must go to Sir Hugh early in the morning. No good can come of our calling him earlier, for his brother will not be fit to receive him, and should his state be merely the result of excitement on the occasion of his

return to his property, it would be unkind of us to expose it."

However, I felt convinced that the symptoms were those of a confirmed drunkard, who is little better than a madman, and more dangerous, for he is always at large. I found Sir Hugh, even at the early hour of seven o'clock, at his farm, talking to John Brown. I called him on one side and told him. He was at first much affected by the news, soon expressed his willingness to accompany me, ordered his carriage, and when we were on the road to Farnborough Hall, he expressed himself as being glad that the suspense was at an end.

I was present at the meeting. I saw that the recognition was mutual, and I withdrew.

What transpired at that meeting remains

a secret. It was a solemn occasion. Two brothers who had parted in anger now met as friends, and when the bell rang Sir Hugh sent for me, and Captain Power, as he styled himself, asked for brandy. I entered the room with some reluctance. Captain Power had some difficulty in raising the tumbler of brandy-and-water to his mouth. I saw his brother eye him. We exchanged glances, and then the Captain, as we must call him, spoke first.

“You won’t be such a fool, Hugh, I know. What do I want of the title or estate? Allow me so much a year. I will go with you and see the old place, if you like, but I shan’t turn you out, old man. I won’t do it, I tell you,” were his words, as he drained the glass and poured out some more. His brother took the glass containing the spirit and dashed it on the

fire. "What are you thinking about?" he said. "Why, you haven't had your breakfast, have you? Don't go drinking spirits like that. Mr. Hope, kindly be at home to-morrow, I wish to see you."

Captain Power looked at the flaming spirit, next at his brother, and then at me.

"What do you think of his treating me like that, after all these years of absence?" he inquired.

"Come along, old man," replied Sir Hugh, and, linking his arm in that of his brother, he led him to the carriage, and called "Home" to the coachman.

"Home!" I repeated slowly, as I returned; "a pretty home it will very soon be, if this night's work is a specimen." "Do you think," inquired Laura, whose face was the only bright one of the party,

“that Sir Hugh will remain and manage the estate?”

“No, my child. I saw that the Squire’s mind was made up; he is coming to see me to-morrow, and, if I mistake not, he will resign everything, and at once.”

A letter, requesting Mrs. House to go immediately to Sir Hugh, was the only news that reached us that day. It was ominous news, and bore with it the intimation that her baby was again helpless and in need of his nurse. We packed her off at once.

“I leave to-morrow for good,” were the first words which Sir Hugh uttered when he came to see me. “I wish your son to take charge of the steam-engines, which do not form part of the estate; and may I leave my dogs and my favourite hunter in your hands, Mr. Hope? Ride him

occasionally. I will pay for his keep. At present I do not know my own plans. I will give you a London address for the present, and may I order my letters to be left here?"

All this I readily assented to.

"And now, Mr. Hope, I have one further request to make. You know what it is."

"I do, Sir Hugh. It is with reference to my daughter. If, sir, you feel that in your present position you would like to reconsider the proposal, there has not, to my knowledge, been anything said to compel me to hold you to that proposal; but if, on the other hand, you would hold me to my promise, I give you my assurance that I was in earnest."

"Thank you a thousand times," said

Sir Hugh. "I do wish to hold you to that promise. My brother's return has saddened my heart on his account, but it has relieved me of the suspense that haunted me, and I should like to make known my intentions to your daughter."

"I will go and bring her," I said; but, oh! what a difficulty I had to persuade her to accompany me. I nearly gave it up, but at last she allowed me to conduct her to the presence of her anxious admirer.

A little golden band round one finger was the token of all that was said, and when Sir Hugh, as we shall continue to call him, came to take leave of my wife and myself, he cheerfully said:

"Mind you write from time to time, and tell me all that is going on, Mr. Hope: for although I shall be absent for

some time, you have my heart in double keeping, and I shall be very anxious to hear about all my late tenants."

That little golden band was a subject of great curiosity to Miss Fanny. It was not our wish that Laura's engagement should be made public. We knew that Fanny could not keep a secret. She was not at home when Sir Hugh called. And thus the first secret crept into our family. Laura told her that it was the gift of a very dear friend. Miss Fanny determined to find out who that very dear friend was.

Poor old Brown, who had been steward to Sir Hugh, soon toddled down to Farnborough Hall in great trouble. He shed tears for his late master, and made up his mind to leave his situation, and came to me for advice.

“ Bless you, master,” said he, “ that ’ere Captain Power is clean mad ! Talks about selling our breeding flock of ewes. Has put two of the best cart-horses in the auction sale, and sent a lot of pigs off half fat, just as they were doing well, and would have paid double the next six weeks. He has ordered me to thrash all them beautiful ricks of corn, to sell the wool which I stored till the price got better, and the wine and spirits is a going in there by the cart-load. I wish you would go up and have a talk to ’un.”

“ And what do you think a man who hadn’t the common politeness to thank me for housing him as a stranger, or to return me the cab fare I paid for him, would say if I ventured to speak ? Eh, John ? ”

“ Ah ! he never knows one day what

he did the last, master. Why, there's a whole ship's crew acomin' down to-morrow to stay a week. What will be the end on't?"

"Look here, John," I said. "It is no good you or I attempting to divert a dissipated seafaring man from a headlong career. Nothing will ever stop him, but 'the end of it,' as you call it. Do your duty to the best of your ability, and bear with him if you can. It is his own property. Someone else will be in your shoes if you left him to-morrow morning. Whilst you are there we all know that in you we have at least one friend at court. I will always stand your friend, if you need one; it is the rector who should reason with him, if anyone, not one of his tenants."

"Bless you, master, the rector did call on him to-day."

“And how did he receive him, John?”

“Why he kicked him clean out of the front-door, master, and chucked a bowl of punch after him. There will be fine goings-on, when them sailors comes down, I know.”

I had hard work to persuade poor old Brown to settle down again to his duties, but at last he toddled off, muttering: “As you say, when he has sold it all, there won’t be none to sell, and somebody else will have the worry of him.”

The ship’s crew, chiefly Americans, came down, and their sayings and doings were the chief attraction of the neighbourhood for many miles round. Special carriages were engaged to meet them at the station, and they commenced the visit by distributing rum and tobacco to the populace. They brought with them an ele-

phant and three monkeys, which Captain Power had purchased. Petty officers, rated men, seamen, firemen, landsmen, and a full band, now manned the old hall. Rioting and drunken revelling reigned supreme. Females, dressed in silk, who called themselves ladies, arrived soon afterwards, and notices of a grand ball, in honour of the Captain's return, were issued with his signature. All the tenants were invited to join in the rejoicings, together with their wives and daughters, and a clause was added to the notes of invitation :

“No gentleman will be admitted unless he brings two ladies with him.”

This clause was fully discussed at a special meeting of our County Farmers' Association, and we were unanimous in our agreement not to attend Captain Power's ball. We felt, indeed, that the return of

one who openly defied and disrespected all laws of morality and tranquillity had deprived us of a good and sensible landlord, whose loss we deeply regretted. We felt, that to attend such a gathering would be to subject ourselves to foreseen insults; and, although we had no power to reason with our landlord, still we were not obliged to attend to this summons, and we did not. Captain Power was very angry, and very boisterous, when he ascertained our determination. The ball was a failure. Not one of the neighbouring gentry attended. It ended in a brawl, and Captain Power was carried to bed helplessly intoxicated. Mrs. House left the next day, but not before she had informed us of what she termed the "dreadful goings on." Many of the guests were themselves ashamed of the proceedings, and those who remained

were such men as are prepared to sponge and to help to spend the very last shilling.

Captain Power had now spent the whole of the available property on his home-farm. He began to want money. He made it known that he was in want of an agent to manage his estate, and one Mr. Hustlethem, a gentleman who had hitherto been known chiefly as an auctioneer and house-agent, applied for, and obtained the appointment of agent to the estate.

Our County Farmers' Association was now fully employed meeting the demands of Mr. Hustlethem. Many of the tenants were in arrear, and it was only by our jointly arranging for certain advances to be made that many of them were enabled to ward off the attacks of Hustlethem. Separately, several men would have been victimised; but jointly, securities were

forthcoming which enabled us to raise the sums in arrear; and then, with new leases and moderate rents, we were able to defy Hustlethem, and to hold our own. The only man who did not attend those meetings was Mr. Aldridge, but as a man of private means, we all naturally concluded that he had paid his rent.

Individually, I had nothing to fear, because I had no rent to pay; but I think that when a man belongs to an association it is his duty to attend the meetings, and to lend his name, if he can do so without incurring unreasonable risk. It is wonderful what two men can do to help one another, and when two are multiplied by ten, then it is beyond the power of any wolf to attack a single sheep. I do hope that farmers will throw to the wind the ridiculous idea which has been

carried out in every village in England, viz. that because A farms 500 acres, B, who farms only 50 acres, must touch his hat to him ; that C, who farms 300 acres, and does not send his daughter to a fashionable school, is not a fit associate ; that D, who farms 200 acres, and is a Roman Catholic, is a lot out of catalogue ; that E, who farms 100 acres, and ploughs and sows his own land, is only fit to keep company with his cowman. If the wives and daughters like to form their own associations, why, let them ; but the time has certainly arrived when tenant-farmers should no longer be as an unmade hurdle, sticks to light the fire of the first gipsy that passes ; but they should nail themselves together with good wrought-iron nails, to close the fence and bar the way to destruction. Recollect that it does not

require all headpieces to make our hurdle ; a chairman and a deputy-chairman will do of that sort, but we want many little pieces to fit in as crossbars. You must have a little tar to keep you on your legs ; stick it on in the right place, and you will spoil the black coat of many an undermining parasite, who transforms himself when above-ground so that his employer takes him for a glowworm and a shining light, whereas he is a crawler and a grub.

It was not pleasant, our living thus at daggers-drawn with Hustlethem and the Captain. There was no comfort in it—a double dread of ruination and poverty in the event of any man's crop failing. Dame Nature was, indeed, the only champion that many a man had to look forward to to fight Hustlethem. She appeared to have it all in her own hands.

She has not been kind of late years ; and, although the wheat went in and came up well, and the rye, tares, and, indeed, every winter crop, never looked better than in the autumn of 1881, still, many a man's face wore a serious expression, and one farmer remarked "that he had just as lief fight a parcel of savages or wolves as a man from whom no mercy could be expected in the event of another bad season."

I don't see much security of person and property in the matter myself. In England we boast about a good many things that we don't possess.

Captain Power drank heavily. He met with a serious accident, and again the rector called on him. He promised on his recovery to go to church. His recovery was rapid, and on the Sunday in question he, having recovered his usual health,

announced his intention of keeping his word, which he did by riding his elephant to church. He tied the now savage brute outside the church-door. Those who were late for church were afraid to enter; and those who were within were afraid to go out, until the rector, having aroused Captain Power from a sound sleep—the result of brandy and his sermon—that worthy unfastened the elephant, and rode home, amid the admiring shouts of boys and rowdies, who were now having a glorious time as hangers-on at the mansion. The work on the Captain's home-farm was now getting in arrear; but more to keep poor old John Brown happy than to please our landlord, George had taken the steam-plough and done the best he could with it. Somehow the steam-plough does not plough ground to my satisfaction for wheat,

particularly after clover. I should not like to use it for that purpose myself, for it leaves the ground too hollow. I feel sure the wheat will lose plant in the winter. We wrote to Sir Hugh, informing him that we had sent the steam-plough to the home-farm. Indeed, we kept him posted in the matter of his brother's conduct, and he wrote him long and earnest letters, remonstrating with him, to none of which he received any reply.

* * * *

The tea-things had been cleared away, Laura and I were busy with our half-hour's booking—which time, if devoted daily, is ample for a proper record of all business transactions on the farm—when I heard a scratching at our outer office-door. At first I paid no attention, thinking it was the wind, or the leaves of the grape-tree, or

both ; but a repetition caused me to take a hold of the poker with my right hand, and opening the door with my left, who should walk in but Keneally. Beating his strong tail against my legs, and going to Laura, to have his shaggy head patted, he appeared to be in great spirits. First he came to me, then to Laura, and next he ran to the door, which I had closed. It was unusual for the dog to do this, his duty being to lie in his kennel and mind the farm. If a stranger came to the farm at night, he always came barking to the house ; but to see him behaving in this strange manner convinced me that something unusual had happened, so I put on my hat, and taking my walking-stick, I went forth, with the dog bounding around me, to ascertain the cause of his singular behaviour. I had not proceeded far before Keneally crept close

to my heels. This again was contrary to his custom. I was looking behind me to see what he was doing, when I came upon a flock of sheep coming down the road.

"Lie down, old man," I said to him. "So that is what you wanted to tell me. I wonder what sheep these are. We must shut them up in one of the yards until morning."

I heard some man driving them in the rear, so I called out :

"Whose there ? Haven't you mistaken your road ?"

"No, master ; no mistake," replied the well-known voice of John Brown. "They be your sheep, master. Put them in the yard, and I'll come and tell you all about it, master."

I obeyed. We put the sheep in the yard. I patted Keneally, brought him

in to have a little extra supper, and led the way to my office.

"I want to talk to you all alone, master," said John, glancing at my son George, who had come to see if he could help.

"I have no secrets from George," I said, and John Brown continued as follows :

"Master, you know I couldn't sit by and see you robbed. You was a kind friend to me once, and there always comes a time to pay a good action. I was up at our new landlord's last night to take him some money, when who should come in but Mr. Hustlethem, the agent. My master told me to wait outside in the hall, until he had done with the agent, and when I had gone he banged the door up that quick that he shut my smock in the door, and I couldn't get away for ever so long. I didn't like to knock at the door,

for I was afraid he would knock me down, so I twitched and I twitched, until at last I gets my smock out, and the door came a little way open same time. I heard that Hustlethem tell him that he couldn't get Mr. Aldridge's rent, and that the time was up, as may be to-morrow morning, and that, unless the money was paid all up, he should bring three men over to take possession of all Mr. Aldridge's things. He said there was just enough on the farm to pay all up, and that the sheep would pay one year's rent. Now, I knew the sheep were yours, master. I knew there was no time to lose, so I said to my old 'ooman, I says: 'You go to bed. I shan't be long.' I took my lantern to make believe I had some of the cattle to see to, and I came straight off and brought your sheep from Mr. Aldridge's field; for I couldn't rest in my bed and

think I had the chance of saving them, and not do it. So now, master, I don't know whether I've done right or wrong, but I done it for the best. 'Twould be hard on you to lose a flock of sheep to pay another man's rent, and I heard say that it don't matter who they belongs to if the landlord 'strains for rent, and I know that Hustlethem won't stand at nothing. That old dog of yours came out and met me at the top of the road. And now, master, I must be off back again in case I should be missed."

"John," said I, taking him by the hand, "you have done me a kindness that I shall hope to repay. Here is a five-pound note to start with. George, you go and get John a glass of something warm to comfort him, and then put the mule in

the cart and drive him home, for a friend in need is a friend indeed."

"Not one penny, master, will I take, not if my hand drops off; if I have a glass to drink, I can walk home all right across the fields. I never met anyone, and no one will be the wiser."

You may be sure that when I told my family they all came to thank John Brown.

"There may be laws for such goings on," replied John, "one law for the rich man, and one law for the poor man; but right is right after all. I thought of you all, and what I should think of myself afterward if you lost the sheep through my not telling of you, so I never 'sulted not nobody, but come straight away with them. We have pretty near sold every-

thing at our farm now, for our new Squire's devilment, and if he gives me the sack I can go any day."

"All right, John; but you know what I told you before. Bear with him if you can, and come to me when you want a friend."

Poor old John took his stick and toddled off into the darkness, conscious that he had fully repaid me for the little help I had rendered him."

"Where's George?" I inquired.

"George has gone somewhere for me, Pa," replied Fanny.

"And where may that be, my child?"

"To Mr. Aldridge, to warn him of what is to come."

"My dear," I said reprovngly, "you should have consulted your parents before taking this step."

"I was afraid, Pa, that you would say no, and I knew there was no time to lose, so I sent him off directly."

"What a sad thing for Mr. Aldridge and the girls!" remarked my wife. "What will they do?"

She had hardly spoken when a knock at the door announced the arrival of visitors, and the two Misses Aldridge were shown into the room.

"Oh Mr. Hope," said the elder, "do help us! Papa says we shall lose everything. He cannot pay. May we leave our dresses here?"

"Oh yes, anything in the shape of clothing; nothing else."

"Thank you! thank you!" followed, and then the young ladies announced that they were each wearing three dresses, that they would like to leave two and their

wrappers, and run off for another set of skins.

How hurriedly those poor girls undressed; nothing but a fire could have had the same effect on them; ceremony and headdress were discarded, and they scrambled for their finery as a shipwrecked sailor scrambles for his life. Life to them without dress would be intolerable. A few hours only stood between them and bankruptcy. Their father knew it, and had told them. Without regarding my presence they stripped themselves of their two outer dresses, and then, with only an evening dress to shelter them from the cold, and their hats, they hurried away for another lot of finery. Next time they came doubly wrapped, and carrying as well a bundle of their mother's silks and a bird in a cage.

"You will let me leave my dear little bird, Mr. Hope, won't you?" said the elder.

I could not refuse the little fluttering prisoner a home, and hung it up in my office.

"Bring the things upstairs, dears," said Fanny. "Are you going to bring any more to-night?"

"No, dear," replied Miss Aldridge, junior. "Papa is packing the plate and some valuables in the waggonette, and going to drive off with the pair. Your George has gone on to London with a string of all the best horses, and Lionel has gone away with a drove of the best cattle."

I was vexed to hear that George had undertaken such a journey, and fearing that the absence of Mr. Aldridge would cause an immediate inquiry, I sent word

to him on no account to absent himself, but to be there to meet Hustlethem; further, not to trust anyone but his own family, for although one occasionally meets with a trustworthy assistant in a time of distress, such cases are rare. A reward, too, often unlocks them.

The Aldridge girls were upstairs for some time. They left without wishing us good-night, which I excused under the circumstances; and, when I inquired for my daughters, I was told that they were so tired putting the things away that they had retired to rest without coming down.

My first care in the morning was to pen the sheep John Brown had brought home on my own turnips. They had improved on Mr. Aldridge's turnips. Another week, and I should have sent for them under any circumstances. I was late to breakfast.

I was told that the girls had partaken of their breakfast. As I again went to see to my farm, I found one of Mr. Aldridge's carts and an old brood mare waiting at the top of the lane. The man beckoned to me, and gave me a note from Mr. Aldridge. It ran as follows :

“DEAR MR. HOPE,—I am deeply indebted to you. In this cart are our boxes of linen, best china, provisions, our guns, and many other things. Pray do what you can to save them, and accept this my favourite brood mare for your trouble. The driver is the only man who has helped us to pack. He is to be trusted.”

I scarcely knew what to do. There was only one thing came across me at the time, and that was to send them to Mr. Bull's

farm. There was a cab coming in the distance. I trembled lest it should contain Hustlethem and his bailiffs. There was no time to consider, so I said :

“ Take them to Mr. Bull’s, and ask him to take care of them. Turn the mare out in the meadow, leave the cart, and come back this way.”

The cab drew nearer, and as it passed I noticed Hustlethem draw his head quickly back, as he saw me with my gun on my shoulder. Whether his conscience warned him of approaching danger, or whether he had been reading Irish news, I could not say ; but his nervous evil look bespoke his mission, and as the cab passed I saw three other men inside. Even the cabman had a cunning guilty look, so different to the usual smiling face that I had seen him carry on that box.

John Brown's prediction was right. The bailiffs were lodged, and the cab drove back again with Mr. Hustlethem seated in a commanding attitude; his legs crossed, and an air of profound dignity on his countenance, as if he had been a magistrate who had just left the bench. I watched for him. I felt for Aldridge, whose servant soon came to tell me that he had left horse, cart, and boxes as desired, and that they understood it was Master David's things.

"Best so," I replied. "Tell your master I will come over as soon as I can."

"Fanny," I called on my return, "come and give this little bird some water. You girls are always fond of pets, but too apt to forget to feed them."

Laura came instead, and closing the door, said :

"Father, don't be angry. Fanny is not at home. She has gone to help the Aldridges. You know she is engaged to Lionel. We could not keep her here, and so thought it best not to tell you. We thought she would have been home before this."

"But I am angry," I hastily replied. "Where is your mother? What have I done to merit this treatment? There should be always perfect confidence between parents and grown-up children. It is this sly underhanded half-knowledge, false representations, false position, and want of a common bond of open-heartedness and affection, that leads to all family disunion and disgrace. I have always treated you with confidence and love. Why have you deceived me?"

"Papa dear," replied Laura, placing her

hand on my shoulder, "I would have told you. I was coming to do so. I had started, when Fanny stopped me. 'If you do, sister,' she said, 'I will tell the whole world of your engagement to the Squire. You tried to keep that a secret from me. Pa and Ma helped you, and I *will* go.'"

"And how did Fanny know anything of the Squire's proposal?"

"This letter," said Laura, "came yesterday. I dropped it. Fanny ran away with it, and read it."

She handed me the letter. It was a long one, inquiring after us all, and proving that our late Squire still took the same interest in our welfare.

"My fault!" I replied. "The first secret in a family is the first detonator. It is sure to explode some day. To keep

such a thing in a house is perilous. There shall be no more secrets stored here, Laura. You and I will go and bring her home at once."

"Have dinner first, Pa. It is all ready."

"Very well, my dear."

I had barely finished dinner when a telegram was handed to me. It came from Brighton, and ran as follows: "From Fanny to Mr. Hope. To-morrow—coming—safely—arrived."

It puzzled me. It puzzled us all, until Laura read it backwards: "Arrived safely; coming to-morrow," and then the truth dawned upon me.

My daughter Fanny had driven Mr. Aldridge's carriage and pair of horses, together with their valuables, to Brighton. That she had started in the dead of the

night—alone, for all we knew—was certain ;
—and I seized my hat and stick, and made
for Mr. Aldridge's farm in a desperate
temper, I admit.

Laura's hand was soon linked in my
arm. She sobbed :

"I am very sorry, father dear. I didn't
think she would do such a thing ; but
you know how fond she is of driving a
pair. She has arrived safely. Poor Mr.
Aldridge has trouble enough himself. Don't
add to it, father dear. It shall never
happen again."

"And I'll take particular care it doesn't,"
I muttered, as I crossed the stile and
helped my daughter over. "Mr. Aldridge
ought to have known better than to have
trusted her with those two spirited horses.
I am surprised at him."

"You don't know yet," meekly replied

Laura. "Very likely Fanny drove away without asking. She always acts before she thinks ; but if she has saved the things and gets home safely, I will look after her for the future. I will indeed, Pa."

By this time we were at Mr. Aldridge's front door. Mrs. Aldridge opened the door. Her servants had packed their things, demanded their wages, and left her to do the best she could.

A bailiff sat in the drawing-room. There was another in the kitchen, which commanded a view of the yard, and a third taking an inventory of everything on the farm.

Mr. Aldridge was pale as death. I handed him the telegram. Laura held one finger up for me to be silent, and whispered to Mr. Aldridge to read it backwards. He did so, and said he was relieved;—for

he assured me it was not his fault; Fanny would go.

"If that is a letter or telegram," said one of the bailiffs, who had been listening, "it belongs to me."

Mr. Aldridge tore it in two pieces and threw it on the fire. It caught fire directly, but the bailiff seized the part with most writing on it, stamped on it, extinguished the fire, and proceeded to attempt to read it. Fortunately, the portion with Brighton written on it was destroyed in the fire. I could still read the word Brighton in red letters in the black ember that remained of the burnt paper lying on the fire. I poked it with my stick, it flew up the chimney, and the baffled expression on the man's countenance, as he tried to make out Fanny's telegram, brought her merry countenance before me. I could see her

laughing in his face "ghost-fashion." I felt proud of the little Turk, and I forgave her, should she get back safely.

"There will be a frightful row about this job," remarked the bailiff, addressing me.

"Why?" I inquired.

"'Cos there's nothink 'ere. The sheep are gone, the cows are gone, the 'osses are gone, and there's no plate. I've sent a man round to take stock of what's outside, and I'm taking the inside; and, if this gentleman doesn't tell us where it all is, I must telegraph to the governor. He is coming again in the morning, but I must let him know to-night."

I saw Mr. Aldridge's expression change. Mrs. Aldridge caught hold of my arm, or she would have fallen.

"Have these good men had their dinner?" I asked.

"Not a blessed drop or bit all day," angrily replied the men.

"Oh, that's hard lines," I said. "There's plenty in the house, I suppose, madam?"

"There is some cold beef and ham," answered that lady.

"Laura, my dear, help Mrs. Aldridge set it out for them; and come, governor," I said, "just come and show me which is the best ale. I want to talk to you."

Mr. Aldridge mechanically took the key-basket, and led the way to the cellar. Once there, I told him it was no use quarrelling with the bailiffs. It was no fault of theirs they were there; they are only the living wheels of the great machinery of "distress." "Most of them," I said, "are men whose goods and chattels have been swallowed by the monster 'law;' and having petitioned for some

redress, have been themselves placed as small cog-wheels in the great machine. They have no personal interest in the matter ; their three shillings and sixpence per day, and sometimes food, is the extent of their share in the plunder. Bring up a couple of bottles of that old port wine. Intimate to the head man that if he does his best for you you will not forget him, and he will help you to all you are entitled to, and put you in the way to obtain it. Cross, irritate, and send them out for food, and you will get no help ; and that man will telegraph for Hustlethem, who will put the wires in motion to find your cattle ! You may lose two hundred pounds for the want of discretion."

" But," said Mr. Aldridge, " there is more than sufficient to pay what I owe on the farm now if it is fairly valued."

“Yes, yes, I know that, Mr. Aldridge ; but the law of distress enables Mr. Hustlethem to sell all your movable things, but declines to give you credit for any fixed labour, growing crops, or improvements. All these remain the property of the landlord, who can kick you out without a penny, and seize 1000*l.* or 2000*l.* worth of your labour, which you have no ability to remain and harvest. You do as I tell you with these men. Treat them as you would like to be treated, were you in a similar position.”

“God forbid I should ever be !” sighed Mr. Aldridge ; “but I think you are right. You carry this jug ; I will bring up the wine.”

“Here’s your good health, Mr. Hope, and yours too, Sir, and Mrs., and the two young ladies, and I hope you will get

comfortably through your trouble," said the head bailiff, with a smiling face, and an eye to the bottles and beef as he drank the first glass of beer. "I'm glad you came across, sir, just to cheer us up a bit. It's mighty unpleasant when people in one house don't understand one another; and if we can do any little thing to help the missus, seeing she has got no servant, one of us has been a gentleman's servant, and can wash up, or make beds, or do anythink. I suppose, sir," said he, addressing Mr. Aldridge, "you haven't got such a thing as a pack of cards you could lend us?"

"Yes I have," replied that gentleman, who now began to take a little brighter view of things; "and here"—further remarked Mr. Aldridge, as he handed a pack of cards and a cribbage-board—"here is a

pound's worth of silver. I will bring you some more beer presently. Help yourselves to the beef and ham, and you will find a corkscrew on the shelf and two bottles of wine."

"Thank you, sir—thank you," followed, and the men settled down to their task. I felt sure that no telegram would be sent to Hustlethem that day.

We remained to tea, cheered them up all we could, and as I walked home with my child, I said :

"Laura, my dear, that is a lesson in real distress. It may be useful to you one day. Everyone should know what real trouble is. In middle-class life, next to the affliction of the loss of any member of one's family, comes the loss of a man's furniture. It is more frequently the case than not that most of the articles of furni-

ture have a history to them—a secret history, known perhaps only to the man and his wife. They were wedding-presents, hard-earned requisites, the proceeds of a stroke of luck, a purchase in memory of a little tour ; each picture represents something more than it shows to the uninitiated ; the teapot belonged to grandmamma, the gun was poor father's, the box of paints belonged to the little boy that died, or the kettle-holder was worked by the one whose tiny portrait hangs on the wall. Some couples will work and strive, pay rates and deprive themselves of all luxuries, only let them keep their little home. Once they have lost it, they fall under the blast of necessity, as leaves in the autumn. The same with our police rules. Magistrates are too fond of convictions. Justice is too thinly shod with humanity ; the

common offender is dealt with as a boy of no spirit, no heart. There is no allowance for bad example at home ; no explanation of right from wrong. Once a boy, lad, or man is convicted, imprisonment is robbed of its dread, and the offender goes on and on in the footsteps of his parents. He knows the worst ; he has experienced it. He has no longer any character at stake."

Laura was silent. We were all silent that night. Two of my family were absent. We were sorry for our neighbours. Sorrow is one thing ; help is another. Mere sorrow is worthless, but a friend's help is priceless. A man who would be honest, and pay everyone, is completely unstrung by such an event as this. He may rally, and save a few things from the wreck, if he has friends to help him, but he can never do it by himself.

He feels no satisfaction in having saved them, and has no energy to renew his struggle in life. Of a farmer, especially, the spirit is broken, and the usefulness of the man's career is at an end. He is unsuited for every occupation, and a burden on his family.

There is an occasional exception to the rule—a man who is determined to rise again. To such an one the road is a rough one. The old friends to whom he looks for support, people who professed to be his friends, people who received kindnesses at his hands, with very few exceptions, turn from him. His relations are often the greatest enemies he has. They may know he is honest. They may know they are themselves dishonest, but they cannot allow their whitewashed frontispiece to associate with the man who has been

unfortunate, and he must fall back, on the road where he had expected to find friendly greetings in his uphill journey, and find new comrades midst strangers, until he gets out of the reach of the curse of this world. Should he succeed in regaining his position, his knowledge of the world will be as a two-edged sword to his enemies.

The next day brought my son and daughter safe and sound. George was very stiff from his long shaky ride. He had left the horses at a London repository in time to be sold that day, but no one knew in what direction Master Lionel had gone with the cattle. He was mounted on his father's favourite hunter, and he had fifteen cows, ten bullocks, seven heifers, a bull, and two cart colts, and a dog with him. He had enlisted a carter boy in

the service, otherwise he could not have managed the colts. That he had got off with the cattle safely was all Mr. Aldridge knew, or cared to know.

As to Fanny, she had positively enjoyed her midnight drive. She had been received all along the road with the usual kindness and courtesy that is always at the service of a lady in England. It was a beautiful starlit night, and, although neither Miss Aldridge nor herself knew the road to Brighton, still, by making inquiry, they had not driven very far out of the nearest road. Two unfortunate landlords of public-houses had been called up to provide food for the horses, and coffee for the fair coachwomen, who, having placed their booty in the safe keeping of a friend of the family, retired to rest, returning to us with the

satisfaction of having been equal to their share in the emergency.

George has bought a promising young hunter belonging to Mr. Aldridge, which was sold at the hammer for 30*l*. This gives him a clear title to its ownership, and I have told him he can follow the hounds if he likes, and try to make 100*l*. of him before the season is over. He will groom his own horse, and attend to business all the same for a day or two's hunting.

Farmers' sons have as much right, or rather more right, to follow the hounds than many of the gentlemen who are now seen in the hunting-field. For instance, take our doctor. His assessment for all rates and taxes is at the rate of 30*l*. per annum for his house and stabling. His income is not less than 500*l*. per annum.

See what a trifle he pays towards the rates in comparison with myself. He can visit in any class of society. He can hunt twice a-week, and ride over my crops, without paying a penny of the poor rate. I don't mind his doing this, but I think such people ought to pay a larger share of the rates. Farmers are undoubtedly taxed and rated on their rolling stock. Work it out how you like, and you can make it come to nothing else; whereas doctors may have in their surgery a sufficient plant and stock of instruments and medicine to dissect and poison the whole of the population, and pay nothing, or next to nothing, towards supporting the people who look to us for a parish doctor's order, and swallow down his mixtures with a relish because they know it costs them nothing and comes out of the poor rate. I daresay the corks,

bottles, and labels are the most expensive part of the business ; and, perhaps, when patients come just as the doctor is going out hunting, they get an extra drop of bitters. The doctor does the paupers at a lump sum ; so much a year for the lot. Perhaps an order for mutton would do most of them more good than an order for medicine. The relieving officer feels bound to do something to pacify the applicants. Medicine has the best of it.

Anyhow, George has as much right to have a ride with the hounds as our officer, the parish doctor, so long as he can make it pay by breaking a young horse, and not incurring the expense of a groom, or neglecting his business. I am sure that a landowner likes to see his tenants enjoy themselves, and to encourage sport. I know, at the same time, what it costs a farmer to keep

a couple of hunters and a man to look after them. In these times it does not run to it. It cannot be carried out, particularly if there is no one on the farm to look after the men whilst the master has gone to the meet. Labourers' habits have entirely changed ; masters must change with them.

* * * *

“Who is this tailor on a horse?” exclaimed George, as a small dark man, with an apparently false black beard, came trotting to our farm, resting each time in his stirrups as though he had pulled a cabbage, and leaning over the horse's neck as if with a determination to throw the poor animal down, should it stumble, and to do his benevolent best to break his own neck into the bargain.

“Mr. Hustlethem, the auctioneer,” I replied ; “the Captain's new agent.”

"I wish to speak to you, Mr. Hope," said Mr. Hustlethem, as he pulled up, dismounted, and handed his horse to George with all the confidence of one who owns an estate, and is speaking to his tenant.

"Walk this way, Mr. Hustlethem," and I led the way to my office, and, opening the side door with a latch-key, I placed a chair by the fire for our new land-agent. It was the first time we had met on business of the estate. I had heard a good deal about Mr. Hustlethem and his *modus operandi*, and now, when he treated me as a sub, and my son as a groom, he had not touched the most musical keynote of my feelings. He commenced by saying :

"I suppose you know what I have come about ?"

"Business of the estate," I answered, following it up by saying: "And pray,

sir, may I ask what do you know about farmers and farming? I always understood that you were an auctioneer."

He immediately rose, looked daggers at me, and replied:

"It is not your business to question my knowledge of any particular branch of my profession. I come here to ask certain questions concerning Mr. Aldridge's property, and I think it will be to your advantage to answer those questions carefully."

"Indeed! I don't follow you, Mr. Hustlethem," was my reply.

"Then, perhaps, Mr. Hope, you will inform me as to the whereabouts of Mr. Aldridge's sheep."

"I cannot, for I believe he had no sheep."

"Had no sheep?" said the little gentle-

man, as he stamped on the floor. "You will tell me next that I am blind. I saw the sheep on the farm the night before I distrained; there are the hurdles where they were penned; and let me tell you they have been tracked to your farm. In fact I know where they are now."

"If," said I, "you refer to the sheep that were feeding off Mr. Aldridge's turnips——"

"I do, sir," interrupted Mr. Hustlethem.

"Then they are my sheep. I bred them, I marked them, and they were merely there eating off turnips because Mr. Aldridge had no sheep; and to tell you the truth, I should not have had enough keep to carry me through had I commenced my turnips earlier."

"Why did you move them?" inquired Mr. Hustlethem.

“I did not move them; they came home. Sheep are very sagacious animals,” I remarked, with a glance at Mr. Hustlethem. “I don’t think they wished to change hands. It would be rather hard for me to lose a flock of sheep because Mr. Aldridge owes you some rent. It is a funny law, sir, that enables you gentlemen to rob Peter to pay Paul’s debts; but I think you are a day behind the fair this time. No doubt you will find plenty on the farm to pay your demand without selling my sheep to help out. We ought to be able to look to you gentlemen agents for protection. Of course you would have given them up, sir, even had you seized them.”

“That, Mr. Hope, is a question that Captain Power would have decided. I act under instructions, and when you say there

is plenty on the farm to pay out the distress, you are greatly mistaken. There certainly is some good household furniture; there are some stacks of damp corn, and some rolling stock. All the best horses are gone, the cows are gone, the carriage and pair have evaporated, and I am informed that not only have you the sheep in your keeping, but that you know the whereabouts of the whole of the property. It is my sincere advice to you to divulge what you know. To begin with, where are the sheep? Come, come, no nonsense; it won't do, Mr. Hope; it won't do."

Once, whilst he was thus addressing me, I was on the point of putting an end to the conversation; but, now that I saw Mr. Hustlethem was under the impression that he could twist me round his little

finger, I determined to have a little fun with him, and so I said :

“Come along, sir ; we will go and see them.”

He jumped up quite pleased, and whilst he was getting on his gloves I was thinking which would be the best way to take him where we should meet with most mud.

“You know,” said he, “Mr. Aldridge has behaved very unhandsomely to Captain Power. He is three years in arrear with his rent, and I have only been able to get 100*l.* from him for the last month. I gave him every chance. It is his own fault, but he will find now that I am not to be trifled with. I can be a very good friend, but once a man crosses me I make no bones about things.”

“Whom have you befriended?” I inquired, as I led my gentleman through some wet

sticky land, which adhered to his boots, and caked on his black trousers.

"Whom have I befriended?" he repeated, as he stretched his little legs wider and wider.

"Why, several people."

"Very pleased to hear it," I remarked.

"We must manage to jump this ditch."

I got over all right, but Hustlethem slipped on the bank, got both feet in the water, and smothered his gold watch-chain with mud.

"Hope you haven't hurt yourself?" I said, as I pulled our new land-agent out of the ditch.

"Oh no; nothing the matter," he answered, as his boots, now filled with water, were doing a little suction-pipe business on their own account. This I pretended not to notice, and leading the

way through a piece of wet rape, reaching to my gentleman's waistcoat, we halted in front of the hurdles where my sheep were.

"There, Mr. Hustlethem," I triumphantly remarked ; "what do you think of those for this year's lambs?"

"Are these the sheep that were on Mr. Aldridge's farm?" was the only reply.

"Yes."

"And what do you intend to do?"

"Oh, I mean to give them one pound of oil-cake from Walter Graham's oil-mills, at West Drayton ; that is the best cake I can get, and to give them some good chaff with it, and keep them along until shearing-time : I hope to turn them out nine and ten stone by that time."

"Be serious, if you please, Mr. Hope. I mean, do you intend to return these sheep or not?"

“Return what, sir? I certainly don’t mean to let these sheep be sold to pay Mr. Aldridge’s debts, if you mean that; and the man who sets foot on this land to take them will meet with the same reception that a sheep-stealing dog did last winter.”

“That is an answer, Mr. Hope. And now, what do you know of the whereabouts of Mr. Aldridge’s property?”

“More than I intend to tell you, sir; I decline to tell you anything. Captain Power was wrongly advised when he instructed you to take these steps. Mr. Aldridge meant to pay you all he could directly he could thrash his corn. There is at this moment sufficient of stock, alive and dead, growing crops, and unexhausted improvements, to pay three times the amount owing for rent. Sir Hugh was satisfied to wait. The back

rent did not belong to the Captain; and although you will yourself benefit by the expenses of levying the commission on the sale and the carrying on the farm when you have kicked him out; still, in the long run, you will find that in two years' time the Captain has been penny wise and pound foolish. I don't hesitate to say, that it is to the readiness on the part of you gentlemen to undertake the completion of the farmer's downfall that we owe much of the present agricultural distress. You are, for the most part, men of straw, whose pen and ink is their stock-in-trade. I doubt not, Mr. Hustlethem, that agricultural distress has been a little harvest for you gentlemen; but understand me, sir, I took this farm of the landlord himself, and so long as there is a landlord, I intend to take my rent, when rent is due, to that gentle-

man. I acknowledge no one else. I pay no one else; for I am quite sure that the English farmer, whose tenancy depends on the clemency of an agent, who does not understand the business of farming, is as a toad beneath a moving harrow."

"I thank you for the comparison," said Captain Power's new agent; "but you must remember that there is a question as to the legality of the leases that have been granted to you gentlemen. You may have to recall what you have said. I certainly shall inform Captain Power of your behaviour; and, as to the sheep, I shall take steps at once."

"You can take that forty-round ladder, if you like, Mr. Hustlethem; and as regards the leases, we have already discussed the question at our Association. You will have to fight us as a body. As a body we worked

hand and glove with Sir Hugh, and as a body we are prepared to meet you."

By this time we arrived again at Farnborough Hall. I called to one of my men to bring Mr. Hustlethem's horse, but nowhere could he find it. It was strange. George, who had taken it in, would not, I know, have taken or sent it away. We searched all the stables, we searched high and low, but could not find it. Mr. Hustlethem sat for some time on a gate. His patience was at last exhausted, and addressing me he said :

"Mr. Hope, if my horse is not found in ten minutes, I shall go for a constable."

"Quite right too, sir. Have us all locked up," I said. "We pay the police, and you, who do not contribute, have the right to use them against us. I hope, sir, you don't think I have stolen the horse. Depend

upon it, the horse will be found all right. A horse or two is nothing to you gentlemen when they belong to a tenant-farmer, but in the case of the horse being your own, it appears to be a different matter."

Just then George came to hand, and, touching his cap ostler fashion to Mr. Hustlethem, he said :

"Did you want your horse, sir?"

"I have been waiting half an hour for it, and I shall wait no longer," indignantly replied our agent.

George promised to produce the horse in one minute, and he did so, to the relief of both the owner and myself.

"It was too bad, George," I said, "to hide the horse. A joke is a joke, but that was carrying the joke too far. We may expect no favours from Mr. Hustlethem."

"And if you did expect them, father, you

would never get them. Hustlethem never gives quarter to any living man, once he clutches his effects."

The boy is right, and there is no doubt that in employing men such as Hustlethem, many a landowner has cut open the hen that laid the golden eggs. It has been the middlemen and the agents who have brought about the Irish crisis. Landlords and landladies, who own land, would do well to follow the example of my noble patron, the Duke of Wellington, who, owning land in different quarters of the globe, satisfies himself that his tenants have reaped a sufficient harvest to maintain themselves ere he receives his rent. His Grace very kindly explained to me the meaning of the term "absentee landlord." "An absentee landlord," said his Grace, "is one whose presence would not justify

his actions." It would, for instance, be impossible for the Duke of Wellington to reside in all parts of his possessions ; nevertheless, he would be and is a welcome visitor and approachable landlord, and pulls up his carriage to give the tenant-farmer a lift to the railway-station.

Had the old French *métayer* system, and the old-fashioned English system of collecting the tithe, been in vogue in England during the past five years, the distress now existing would have been averted. The landowner would have been unable to spend his tenant's capital, the economy which he must now adopt would have been enforced earlier, and the working bees would be still in the hive waiting for better weather. Farmers who lost the whole of their sheep with the rot, were, by the Tithe Commutation Act,

compelled to pay according to corn averages, and the "freedom of contract," which some landlords are so anxious to maintain, left many corn-farmers "free" to pay their rent in full from their capital, the withdrawal of which from the farm ended later on by ruining them, beggaring the land, and now results in the land being *hors de combat* until double the original capital is again invested in it. Where that capital is to come from, who is going to invest it, and what laws are going to be passed as a security for the investment, is the question of the day.

Mr. Aldridge's things were sold under the execution. The furniture made a good sum, as many a petty shopkeeper or scandalmonger scrambled for some article as a glorious relic of the downfall of the people to whom in the days of prosperity they had always offered obeisance.

Every village and country place possesses these little-minded tattlers, who, like the wolves, never attack singly, but rush in for a mouthful of the spoil.

Pairs of sheets, pillow-cases, blankets, and tablecloths realised double the value of new ones, at the bids of these scramblers. The parish clerk and the postmaster bid against each other for the possession of an old bureau, until it made 5*l*. A broker was commissioned by certain old maids of the district to buy things marked on the catalogue, at any price. All this, not that the people wanted the things, but that they might possess an article which people once above them could no longer keep, the production of which at any moment, on any and every occasion, would be a theme for conversation, to enable the possessor to vilify the absent "Aldridges."

When Mr. Hustlethem came to the cattle, the four old horses that had been left were incorrectly catalogued, and much amusement was occasioned by his not knowing a brood mare from an old horse, and a bay gelding from a brown mare.

The farm implements were, as is now usual at these farm sales, completely given away. I wondered that Hustlethem did not buy them in to carry on the work of the farm, but he did not do so. I picked up a few things for David and myself at ridiculously low figures, such as hurdles, sheep-troughs, etc.

Mr. Aldridge and his family left the place two days before the sale, but not ; before he had been very much worried by other creditors, who will be left out in the cold in consequence of Hustlethem sweeping the deck. Already County Court

summonses were pouring in upon him. He will have to liquidate, or to pay a composition, to save his body from being conducted from time to time to the county gaol for non-payment of judgment that will follow minor executions.

Mrs. Aldridge's property is tied to her, and brings in sufficient to keep them in a very quiet way. Otherwise another helpless victim would be added to those whom agricultural depression has ruined.

Mr. Hustlethem engaged someone to buy the carpets in for himself. He has furnished the house, and is coming to live there as our resident estate agent until the farm is let.

No news arrived as to the whereabouts of Mr. Lionel Douglas Aldridge, but Fanny received some secret signal, which she refused to communicate to us, of his security.

David was greatly surprised on his return to hear of all that had happened to our neighbours the Aldridges. We had not advised the young couple of anything unpleasant. No good could come of it, and we thought that it would be unkind to mar their happiness on their wedding-tour by posting ill news. He brought with him many a wholesome lesson in farming from Normandy, of which he made notes, so that he could relate what he had seen. There are many people who appear to go through the world with closed eyes, but no little variation escaped his notice. It is marvellous how these people manage their lands and cattle without waste or fencing, and I hope on some future occasion to compare in detail their mode of farming in comparison with our own. The way

in which they take their meals, too, is very curious ; the abundance of admirably cooked food with which their table is laden involves, like their farming, less than half the cost of our English habitude ; something nice, wholesome, and palatable is produced from a mere nothing, and men and masters live harmoniously together, to sow and reap the fruits of the earth in a totally different manner to that of our own. The system almost carries us back to the time of our grandfathers, when two tables were spread in one room for men and masters, and the servant rose to churn the butter instead of to dust the drawing-room. In those days there was one common interest at stake. What the master said the men re-echoed, and what the master wished done the men wished to do. A good day's work was always recognised by some acceptable

token, and set hours of labour were not in vogue. When a thing wanted doing, it was done, and the men took as much interest in the cattle and the housing of the corn as their masters did. No common interest like this now exists in England, and it will be a difficult matter to re-establish it, without which there is little happiness on a farm.

Mr. Walter, of *The Times*, has, I see, returned from America. I looked forward with great expectation to the perusal of his first speech with reference to the burning question of agriculture. I pictured how he, a man of business, would explain to his tenants and to the public where the great secret of American success lies; and that he would point out to us the stumbling-blocks which now stand in the way of, as it were, our growing in our empty

garden the vegetables for which now we have to trot round to the American shops, and all the while the English labourer knocking at our door for a day's work to dig that garden. I confess that I am disappointed. I find that the whole sum and substance of his speech tends to show how Irishmen have forfeited, or next to forfeited, their land in Ireland, and sought pastures new ; how all nations have successfully sent emigrants to America who have prospered ; and he certainly concludes by recommending Englishmen to go out to balance the scale of settlers in favour of our country. This is hard lines, and by his own showing it is hard lines out there. Take, for instance, the case he quotes of a colony called Le Mars, situate 270 miles south-west of St. Paul, in the north-west part of Iowa, founded five years ago by

three gentlemen named Close, Cambridge men by education, Nottingham men by birth. He says they began by purchasing 30,000 acres, at two and a half dollars per acre, and that they have extended their property to 150,000 acres of splendid land; that they take pupils, young gentlemen who wish to be farmers, and who are made to plough, drive cattle, and perform every agricultural operation, as every farmer who goes out must do. Picture your own son, carefully nurtured, as packed off in a first-class cabin to a rigid climate to undergo penal servitude in this manner, and then call to mind some young gentleman who has been riding a hunter, and pretending to learn farming in England, with a billiard-cue in his hand most evenings, and there you have the secret of the disparity. I say, let Messrs. Close open their close fists and

pay for their labourers. I wouldn't pay a premium to send a son of mine to labour for them, and perhaps lose the boy in the bargain.

Such speeches as that of Mr. Walter's plainly say to the English farmer "Go." But Mr. Walter adds that it is the men of capital who are wanted in America. All right, Mr. Walter; but those are the very men we want at home in England. There may be a few landed proprietors who are in a position to farm their own land, and care not whether a tenant crops up or not, but that is not the general condition of the country. The existing evils must be remedied sooner or later. The time has come to attend to them. The man who emigrates sacrifices his life to the hope that he will be able to re-establish his family in the position he has lost at home. When

farms were all occupied in England he was doubtless obliged to emigrate, and Mr. Walter points to instances where people so emigrating have prospered in America, whilst others who have remained at home have been nearly ruined. Granted, but now our farms are empty, our labourers are begging for work. The would-be tenant stands with his hands in his pockets waiting for the security which will enable him to go in again and win. That security must be forthcoming sooner or later, and the sooner it comes the better for England, her trade, and her landed proprietors.

Mr. Hustlethem took up his quarters at the farm lately occupied by Mr. Aldridge. He drove about with a boy in buttons, and it was evident that he was doing well. He found money for Captain Power, and Captain Power found money for him. How

long it would last became a question of inquiry amongst us. I received from Mr Hustlethem an intimation that if I felt disposed to pay my rent in advance I could receive a handsome discount. I thanked that gentleman, and told him that, what with my own farm and the assistance that my son David required of me, I had my hands quite full ; but, said I, " When the day comes I hope to be ready to a tick, as I know the consequence of a failure."

Mr. Hugh joined his cousin, Mr. Power, in his profession, and very soon wrote to Laura to name the day for their marriage.

Mr. Aldridge was obliged to file a petition in bankruptcy, and after a great deal of trouble and anxiety, he shook off his creditors with a composition of 2s. 6d. in the pound. This amount was paid out of his wife's property, on which they now lived

in a quiet way, without horses or carriages, and with only one servant. When all was settled, Mr. Lionel Douglas put in an appearance. We wondered why Miss Fanny had been busy making pastry, and apparently preparing for a visitor, when in walked the gentleman, in the best of health, and, according to his own account, in possession of a small farm a long way distant. He had driven his cattle for fourteen days, when, finally resting them at an empty farm, he met with the landlord, who offered to accept him as tenant at a moderate rent. Lionel had some ready money of his own. He at once concluded the bargain, and appears to be very comfortably settled. In the spring I hope to pay him a visit, and to see if the little home he has made will be suitable for the reception of my Fanny. We shall see by that time if he

is steady and means to stick to business, and if he does, I tell him that although it will grieve me sadly to part with my merry hearted girl, still I suppose it must come sooner or later. I must accept the position. What do we live for, if it is not to study the happiness of our children before that of ourselves?

Laura named the happy day for her wedding with Mr. Hugh. It was to be celebrated in London, at the house of Mr. Smith—whose kindness and thoughtful assistance will ever secure for him a hearty welcome at Farnborough Hall—and it was to be a quiet wedding.

There were many reasons for this. In the first place, as Mr. Hugh and “Captain” Power were again estranged on account of the latter’s conduct, it could not well take place at home. It could not, under

these circumstances, be so conducted without the danger of further crossing his brother by not inviting him, and his presence would not only have been most disagreeable to my wife and daughters, but it would have endangered the sobriety of the occasion; so, under all circumstances, London, that mighty village which opens its arms to rich, poor, merry, and sad alike, was agreed on as the most suitable city for the celebration of the event.

If six carriages and a house full of guests is considered a quiet wedding in London, why, then Laura's was a very quiet wedding.

Mr. Smith's sisters, Mr. Hugh's cousins, and Fanny were the bridesmaids. I had no idea Mr. Hugh had so many London friends until I saw the sideboard adorned

with handsome presents from them, and one by one they were introduced to us. Compliments and congratulations were poured out as rapidly as champagne. I felt proud of my dear child when I heard so many of Mr. Hugh's friends speak so admiringly of her, and I hope she will be as happy as the day is long. I think she will; and as to Mr. Hugh, why, I felt that if he hadn't a shilling I should be proud of him as a son-in-law, for he is a man of sterling value, whose claims to advancement can never be overlooked in any capacity.

Ah, well! It passed off admirably. Old shoes and rice were hurled after the carriage, and we all returned that night to Farnborough Hall.

It was late, very late, when we reached home, yet still there was one man waiting

anxiously to see me. It was John Brown. He opened the door, and, beckoning me into a side room, said :

“Master, he’s dead! That thair Hustlethem come with a mortgage for ’um to sign this morning, and he found the Captain dead in his bed.”

THE END.

